DÆDALUS

Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Contents

iii Preface to the Issue "Fiction in Several Languages"

925 HOWARD HIBBETT
Tradition and Trauma in the Contemporary Japanese Novel

941 GEORGE N. SFEIR
The Contemporary Arabic Novel

961 N. V. M. GONZALEZ
The Filipino and the Novel

972 ROBERT ALTER
The Israeli Novel

986 E. R. MONEGAL
The Contemporary Brazilian Novel

1004 CZESLAW MILOSZ
The Novel in Poland

1021 COSTAS M. PROUSSIS
The Novels of Angelos Terzakis

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ANTICIPATIONS

1046 ERWIN N. HIEBERT
The Uses and Abuses of Thermodynamics in Religion

1081 Notes on Contributors

1083 Index of Authors for *Dædalus*, Volume 95, 1966

1084 Recent Issues of *Dædalus*

FALL 1966

ISSUED AS VOL. 95, NO. 4, OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Preface to the Issue "Fiction in Several Languages"

In the spring of 1963 *Dædalus* published an issue entitled "Perspectives on the Novel." The suggestion was made at the time that we publish a second volume on fiction written in languages not commonly known in the West, where "the accident of translation" determines whether a particular work (or even an author) becomes generally known. This issue devotes itself to literature of this kind. It is at once a statement about the "condition of the novel" in various parts of the world—including places where it has come to have importance only recently—and a comment on why, given various linguistic, social, and historic conditions, the novel remains, despite its more universal features, an art form that reflects the particularities of different cultures.

Howard Hibbett, writing about contemporary Japanese fiction, is concerned to interpret how familiar themes appear in a setting which is not generally common in the West. The effects of the clash between tradition and modernity, which have "intensified a national self-awareness, a feeling of radical difference, ambivalently superior and inferior," are critically examined. The characters of the contemporary Japanese novel, even while retreating into the preoccupations of private life, find the menaces of the outside world too real to permit them to remain for long in that safe condition. Despite the large indebtedness of the Japanese novel to Western models, Hibbett suggests that its intrinsic and distinctive qualities have not been obliterated.

George Sfeir, discussing the Arabic novel, emphasizes the significance of its recent origin; its existence as a literary form goes back only half a century. Those who first wrote Arabic novels, influenced by European masters, sought to describe social change in the Arab world, seeing it as a conflict of cultural values, best reflected perhaps in the tension between the village and the city. Arabic was not a language easily converted to the novel—there were problems, for example, in rendering dialogue in Arabic. With

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the second generation of novelists, particularly with Mahfouz, the subject matter shifted entirely to the city and its problems. This was a time when the novel came to have new themes; it expressed, among other things, political revolutionary ambitions, and, among women authors, the search for a new role for women in Arab society. The Arab novel, Sfeir tells us, remains very much in flux, searching for new themes and new dimensions.

In his treatment of the Filipino novel, N. V. M. Gonzalez describes a literary form still in its infancy. The linguistic difficulties are compounded by the absence of a middle class, able to support by its patronage and interest genuine literary and critical competence. In the Philippines, Gonzalez says, the novel seems to be evolving more as a tool for social action than as an art form. If the accomplishment remains limited, a good deal more can be said for the Filipino short story. It is in this genre, for reasons which Gonzalez gives, that creative work generally occurs today.

Robert Alter, discussing the Israeli novel, dwells on the linguistic problems; Hebrew, till recently, was the language of piety. The idea of using it for secular purposes required the invention of "ways of converting its obtrusive literariness into an artistic resource." Alter tells of the difficulty of translating early Hebrew novels into Western languages; many of the best novels drew on a mythology and a symbolism which were unknown in the West. This difficulty is less important with contemporary writers, who have emphasized "realistic" themes, finding many of their subjects in the events which brought about Israeli independence. In recent years, a certain disillusion has been apparent in Israeli novels, but Alter suggests why this may be only a passing phase. The Hebrew novel is clearly in a state of transition, with many possibilities beckoning if sufficient attention is given to the unique qualities of the Hebrew language and the Israeli experience.

E. R. Monegal describes the Brazilian novel, which began with a strong regionalist flavor (and bias) and which has been working away from the limitations of that approach in recent decades. His treatment of Joâo Guimaraes Rosa suggests how Rosa came to treat universal themes without losing interest in his native territory. The indebtedness of Rosa to the great European and American novelists of the twenties and thirties is important principally because it heralds the contemporary Brazilian concern with style and form rather than with plot. The new Brazilian writers, free of a desire to depict realistically the world they inhabit, Monegal tells us, are all inter-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ested in problems of language. As he explains, they now see that a "novelist's fight is mainly with language."

Czeslaw Milosz's contributions to the volume are essentially in two parts. In the first, a letter to the Editor, he expresses personal views on the contemporary novel, explaining why he believes poetry rather than prose may be the vehicle for the more profound reflections on man's contemporary condition. Milosz proceeds then to consider the state of the novel in Poland in the twentieth century. The greater part of the article concerns itself with fiction since the end of World War II. Milosz explains why traditional narrative has been inadequate for describing the crimes of genocide committed by the Nazis. The Communist Party's insistence on "socialist realism" served to stifle creativity; and there is not much evidence, since the thaw in Party policy in 1956, that Polish fiction has been equal to the great subjects which it might treat. Milosz believes that the war and the village offer themes with great possibilities for future Polish fiction.

The contemporary Greek novel, particularly as reflected in the works of Angelos Terzakis, is the subject of an essay by Costas Proussis. Through the microcosm of the family, Proussis tells us, Terzakis is "able to delineate the misery and anxiety of his time." His purpose, however, is not simply to testify to the harshness of a particular moment in Greek history; it is also to document the decomposition of certain Greek values, with the family battling unsuccessfully against the new demands of urban and industrial society.

In the Winter, *Dædalus* will publish a special issue on Religion in America. We are pleased to be able to anticipate that volume with an article by Erwin N. Hiebert entitled "The Uses and Abuses of Thermodynamics in Religion." This is both an essay in intellectual history and in the history of science and religion. So much has been written about how religion was affected by discoveries of nineteenth-century biology that it is well to be instructed in what was done to cope with the discoveries of nineteenth-century physics.

S.R.G.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HOWARD HIBBETT

Tradition and Trauma in the Contemporary Japanese Novel

VIEWED FROM abroad, the really "novel" characteristics of modern Japanese fiction seem to derive from the venerable literary tradition linking an age of Peace and Tranquillity, that of the Heian court a millennium ago, with the age of anxiety of the present reign. But it is a long way indeed from the serene world of Prince Genji, whose accomplishments included incense-judging and performing Chinese dances, to the traffic-choked Tokyo of a novel dominated by the *noirōze* ("neurosis," now a household word) of its antihero. It is no wonder that younger writers in Japan sometimes assert that any meaningful link with the past has been broken. Most Japanese novelists, especially in the early stages of their careers, have rebelled against their native literary tradition. Writers and public alike are familiar with a vast range of Western thought and literature, extending from Greek mythology to American Zen; the Tokyo avant-garde in all the arts is seldom outdistanced by New York or Paris. Yet the comparatively few novels that have been translated from the Japanese retain a special flavor unaccountable except for the lingering, pervasive influence of the traditional culture.

The literary themes and techniques imported so eagerly since the Meiji Restoration of 1868 were often successfully grafted onto the ancient stock, and soon seemed indistinguishable from it. Often the attempt was made to transplant whole genres or ideologies, as if they could be expected to survive without modification. Innumerable hybrid and variant forms began to flourish in the Meiji era, to be labeled romanticism, realism, naturalism, neo-idealism, or whatever, with a fine enthusiasm for each new exotic bloom. But there was always a more or less traumatic process of change, as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intellectuals discovered and defined their *Angst,* as writers adopted alien conventions of fiction, and as a newly revitalized literature began to influence as well as to reflect one of the most rapidly developing societies of modern times. Despite the extraordinary growth and prosperity of the literary profession, its wounds have been undeniably severe. Many novelists have suffered from the stresses of an uneasy individualism, and from a related compulsion to confess, if not to sin for the sake of confessing. Among their standard themes is the disgraceful vacillation or anguished choice between family duty and personal freedom of a character who appears to be a self-portrait of the author. Suicide is a frequent solution to such dilemmas, and novelists have been among the notable suicides of every generation since Meiji. Even the themes and tone of popular fiction, with its hopeless marriages, inevitably parted lovers, and conventional unhappy endings, create an atmosphere of gloom almost as impenetrable as that of the serious novel. Naturally these literary and social patterns often recall old configurations. It is not coincidental that the mid-Meiji enthusiasm for *Werther* was accompanied by renewed interest in the seventeenth-century suicide plays of Chikamatsu, nor that Japanese fictional counterparts of the frustrated heroes of Goncharov and Turgenev lapse into moods colored by the Buddhist melancholy of the theme of the medieval *Tale of the Heike:* "The temple bell echoes the impermanence of all things." That epic of defeat was to inspire many popular historical novels, first among them a sad, lyrical tale by Takayama Chogyū, who had already studied Chikamatsu and translated *Werther.* But most writers thought of their private or public agonies, their sense of impermanence and destructive change, as wholly modern phenomena. The literature of their own past represented a burden rather than a store of accumulated wealth.

To be sure, such leading contemporary novelists as Kawabata Yasunari and the late Tanizaki Junichirō have used the resources of their own tradition to advantage. Among younger writers none has done so more skillfully than Mishima Yukio, now in his early forties and the single new postwar novelist to have made an international reputation. Certainly Mishima owes much of his success to the enrichment of his otherwise unexceptionably up-to-date psychological fiction and drama by elements of traditional Japanese art. His "modern Nō plays," for example, brilliantly exploit the possession theme of the Nō, the dramatic inner conflict of a person

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

haunted by the past. The ghosts may be only of the recent past, perhaps of the Meiji era, and may be evoked in a downtown Tokyo park, an antique dealer's showroom, or a mental hospital. But their power has its source in clusters of association that were time-honored long before Zeami used them, with a mastery of literary and dramatic techniques that were also the product of long tradition, in fashioning the classic Nō plays of the fourteenth century.

Unlike Tanizaki or Kawabata, Mishima seems to be drawn toward a theatrically self-conscious art. A discerning critic as well as novelist and playwright, he has stated that the heart of his method is to rely on the unconscious—and has explained in some detail how he controls it. Indispensable to the ritual of writing is a visit to a suitable setting for a work: paradoxically, in view of his skill at manipulating dramatic situations, Mishima says that he is more deeply moved by landscapes than by people. But these expressive landscapes, like the ones Kawabata has mentioned as the origin of many of his stories, are seen as symbolic metaphors of emotion in a manner already well established in Heian literature. Thus *Death in Midsummer* (*Manatsu no shi*) is a detached study in the French analytic vein of a woman mourning her two drowned children. What one remembers most vividly, however, is the ominous beauty of the setting—the "anger in the rays of the sun"—and the tragic irony of death in such a season. The epigraph is from Baudelaire (*La mort . . . nous affecte plus profondément sous le regne pompeux de l'été*"), and possibly the images of the sea have a glint of the Aegean or the Mediterranean. But the sensibility is of a kind that has been cultivated in Japanese literature in every age.

Touches of this sort enhance even the somber last novels of Natsume Sōseki, those in which he portrays with intense poignancy, but also with wit, drama, and profound psychological insight, a sense of loneliness and hopeless failure in human relationships. His memorably unhappy characters are realized through superb dialogue, dialogue heightened by analysis and by the delicately controlled tension of each scene; and they exist in a world that has its own sensuous reality rather than against a flat theatrical backdrop or in abstract detachment from their surroundings. As a novelist of alienation Sōseki has the Chekovian gift of depicting boredom and depression without being boring or depressing, but he has also the sensitivity to nature, the awareness of the changing seasons, of a *haiku* poet. (He took his literary name "Sōseki" when he began studying *haiku*, and he wrote distinguished poetry in Chinese as well

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as in Japanese.) Still, even this master, surely the greatest novelist of modern Japan, has been criticized both for insufficient skill at natural description (by the extremely high Japanese standards) and for undue skill in creating "fiction"—that is, imaginative writing that has a clearly defined structure and cannot be readily interpreted as autobiographical.

To purist critics in Japan, Western concepts of the novel have often seemed incompatible with the transcendent virtue of sincerity, a virtue that is thought to sanction both meandering reminiscence and confessionalist self-exposure. Insistent on the frank identification of author and protagonist, advocates of what is called the I-novel (*shi-shōsetsu*) have tended to equate fiction with falsehood, a Confucian prejudice, rather than with a means toward poetic truth. Novelists who disclaim autobiographical intent risk the charge of frivolity. Mishima and Tanizaki, among others, have been similarly criticized for their inventive talents, particularly after their novels began to attract attention abroad. Unfortunately, only a few of Sōseki's many novels have been translated, and only one of these (Edwin McClellan's version of *Kokoro*) into English of appropriate literary merit. But Japanese critics are inclined to regard with suspicion any novelist whose work has been admired in the West. Perhaps it is to be expected that writers in the discursive reminiscent vein of the I-novel should strike Western readers as so many wayward essayists, and that, conversely, novelists whose techniques are closest to those of the West are more likely to be read merely from an interest in their exotic subject matter. Yet in fact much of the appeal of modern Japanese novels abroad lies in the treatment of familiar themes—however unfamiliar their cultural setting. These themes have been explored most effectively by writers of verve and daring whose methods are in part traditional but who are also alert to the innovations that have transformed the literature of Japan since Meiji.

By far the most vigorous of the older Japanese masters whose careers survived the shattering Greater East Asia War was Tanizaki Junichirō, a novelist so prolific that one learns with surprise from his memoirs that he wrote very slowly. He envied Natsume Sōseki's capacity to dash off an installment for a newspaper serial in the morning, leaving the afternoon free for more lofty pursuits; he also regretted that his work had allowed him inadequate leisure for such pastimes as reading, travel, and love. Still, after more than half a century of dazzlingly successful industry, with all the re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wards and honors due a pre-eminent literary elder statesman, Tanizaki remained as devoted as ever to his craft. His chief pleasure was writing, a pleasure which, along with his predilection for reading his own works, he modestly ascribed to weakening eyesight. But he also wanted to entertain, to enlighten, and to shock. In his flamboyant early stories Tanizaki seemed to be trying to naturalize the more outrageous literary ideas of Wilde and Baudelaire, but his later work makes it clear that these themes were indeed his own, and that the traditional elements in their expression —the Kabuki-like settings and atmosphere—were also important to him. Neither as a Westernizing bohemian nor, in the thirties, as a writer of beautifully finished tales in Heian, medieval, or Meiji styles did he use his virtuoso techniques merely to disguise the alarming implications of his art. From his debut in a literary magazine in 1910—he must have been chagrined that the issue was banned because of someone else's contribution—until his death in the summer of 1965 at the age of seventy-nine, he continued to devise new ways to reveal disturbing truths to a wide reading public.

Perhaps the most disturbing of all his novels, indeed of all postwar Japanese novels, was *The Key* (*Kagi*), a spare, claustrophobic study of middle-aged depravity which appeared in 1956 when Tanizaki was seventy. The very style of *The Key* seems as shamefully naked as Ikuko, the professor's wife, in the scenes of bath and bedroom where she lies drugged with brandy, exposed under glaring lights to her husband's voyeurist scrutiny. The book opens with the New Year's Day diary entry of the aging professor (the reader never learns his name, and has only a hint of his apparently neglected occupation) and goes on with alternating extracts from the diary of his somewhat younger wife. Their diaries and their energies are concentrated on the stimulation of sexual passion, by whatever means and at whatever cost. For the husband, like the author a victim of high blood pressure, the ultimate cost is death. But his demure, respectable wife becomes an insatiable *femme fatale*, quite ready to destroy Kimura, the young man who is by then her lover and who is to marry her daughter. That her husband has carefully arranged the liaison, if not the engagement, seems a reasonable stratagem in this desperate battle. The two "secret" diaries, used as a deceptively guarded means of communication between husband and wife, permit candid though confusing glimpses of the process by which a cultivated, tormented man, presumably trying to recapture sexual vitality, sacrifices all the less exacting pleasures

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of his highly civilized world in a blind effort to enact his persistent fantasies.

The two diaries stand in antagonistic contrast, different even as printed in their external form—the husband's written by fountain pen in the square syllabary used for official documents, the wife's by the traditional (and soundless) writing brush on thin rice paper in a feminine cursive script. Both diarists are wily, deceitful, intent on the life-and-death erotic struggle that culminates their two decades of unhappy marriage. We never know how far to believe these confessions, nor do we learn much, except indirectly, about the thoughts of the people who write them. At first Ikuko declares that she has no intention of reading her husband's diary, in spite of having been allowed to find the key to the locked drawer in which he keeps it: "I haven't the faintest desire to penetrate his psychology, beyond the limits I've set for myself. I don't like to let others know what is in my own mind, and I don't care to pry into theirs." Later she observes that most of that passage—all but the part about not liking to let others know her own thoughts—is untrue. Thus the reader has the privilege of enjoying intimate but suspicious revelations. The narrative method only hints at characterization; a few quoted snatches of dialogue delineate the student-accomplice Kimura and the disgusted, jealous, but conspiratorial daughter. The minds of the characters hold as many secrets as does the shadowy, silent old Kyoto house, the faintly sketched background against which the drama is played.

Rarely has there been such dramatic intensity in the modern Japanese novel as there is in *The Key*. The diary form, stemming from an ancient literary tradition in Japan, is usually a quasi-fictional genre, hardly differentiated from the novel. The novel itself is often considered "pure" only in the vein of autobiographical fiction of the I-novel, disguised very thinly if at all. The I-novel recommends itself as literature partly by stylistic beauty but mainly by the sincerity—whether of contemplative earnestness or confessional daring—of the author. Self-analysis is a frequent aim, though the results are seldom rigorously analytical. A mist of romantic or sentimental self-deception often clouds the supposedly pure I-novel. Tanizaki, however, was one of the few major novelists who used a wide range of Western fictional techniques without a trace of anxiety. He willingly defended the importance of fabrication, of plot, the "lie" that many Japanese writers have considered an obstacle in their search for truth. But Tanizaki also took whatever

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he needed from traditional literature. He adapted the style of the leisurely essay to a dramatic narrative, for instance, or blended the conventions of the diffuse, elegant *monogatari*—the "tale" in the sophisticated lineage of the eleventh-century *Tale of Genji*—with those of modern fiction.

In his last novel, *Diary of a Mad Old Man* (*Fūten rōjin nikki*, published in 1962), he used the diary form to create a sharp satirical portrait of an unruly though severely ill old gentleman whose tantrums and perversities belie the stock character of the elderly connoisseur of the arts. A man with tastes similar to those of the bland narrator of earlier novels (who revealed himself only discreetly, quoting a bit of poetry here or commenting there) has confided to this singular diary his most secret and ignoble thoughts, his curious remaining lusts, his childishness, his ill temper, his bitter humiliations and the perverse satisfaction derived from them, together with the richly orchestrated suffering and obsessive self-regard of a man whose sensibilities have for decades been attuned to art, to the nuances of sexuality, and to death.

Utsugi Tokusuke, the shrewd, Sybaritic Mad Old Man, seems to be a diarist with remarkable self-analytic insight, to say nothing of frankness, a model of psychological perspicacity in the service of a sincere desire for self-knowledge. He knows that he has a weakness for women with bad character and beautiful feet. When he observes his growing interest in the young Kabuki actors who play feminine roles, he calmly speculates on the relation of a youthful homosexual experiment to the sexual impulses that persist, at seventy-seven, now that he is impotent. He tends to dwell on his physical deterioration and other disagreeable qualities, much as he insists on removing his false teeth in order to show his daughter-in-law Satsuko exactly how ugly he is. He recognizes the masochism in his costly infatuation with Satsuko—a girl with a doubtful past who likes imported luxuries and who enjoys boxing matches, the bloodier the better. He is quite aware that his efforts to provide her with a lover have a selfish motive. Yet Utsugi is not merely shown to us in the unflattering glare of satirical illumination, nor as a more realistic (because more fully human) variant of the self-portrait of the I-novelist. Although there is no male-female counterpoint between diaries after the fashion of *The Key*, the comic, querulous, touching monologue ends abruptly and is followed by a quick succession of accounts from other points of view as the reader awaits with suspense the outcome of the gravest of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the old man's attacks. All that is revealed of it, and of later events, is what is set forth in the nurse's slightly vulgar report, the doctor's formidable clinical records, and the notes by a daughter, sullen or shrewish in the diary, who is seen in an unexpectedly sympathetic light. Once again Tanizaki concludes his novel on a tentative note, the future in doubt and the characters somewhat more ambiguous than the reader had at times taken them to be.

Again the underlying themes are the relationship between love and cruelty, the necessary antagonism between Eros and Thanatos, between sexuality and the dark forces of decay symbolized by the medicines and appliances meant to combat them. The embodiment of these themes in character, action, and atmosphere is as spontaneously vital as ever. Utsugi's dream of his mother, recalled in all her classic Bodhisattvaesque beauty when he was a small child, is immediately associated with thoughts of the utterly different (though equally beautiful) modern temptress Satsuko. Far from shaving off her eyebrows and dyeing her teeth black in proper early Meiji style, Satsuko "has her hair set in a permanent wave, wears earrings, paints her lips coral pink or pearl pink or coffee brown, pencils her eyebrows, uses eye shadow on her eyelids, glues on false eyelashes and then, as if that isn't enough, brushes on mascara to try to make them look still longer." Utsugi's schemes to apotheosize Satsuko as a Bodhisattva engraved on his tombstone, or, better yet, to have Buddha's Footprints carved to the pattern of rubbings of her feet, supply a further, doubtless unconscious link between the usually isolated and antithetical images of woman as madonna or harlot, the sexually "pure" mother or the degraded, degrading seductress. In *The Key,* Ikuko, a respectable woman with an old-fashioned Kyoto upbringing whose body has "the gently swelling lines of the Bodhisattva in the Chuguji Temple," is corrupted from her stubborn feminine modesty as she takes to wearing earrings, lace gloves, and Western-style dresses that reveal her voluptuously curved legs. In *The Bridge of Dreams* (*Yume no ukihashi*) the images of mother and mistress are again fused, and the aura of incestuous guilt is particularly noticeable. Yet these mysteries, too, elude easy translation into pathological terminology. Such a tale may well be interpreted as a male fantasy of the sort described as "the most prevalent form of degradation" in Freud's first and second "Contributions to the Psychology of Love." But the novel's narrative subtlety, its indefinably complex characters, its nostalgic setting of a secluded Kyoto house and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

garden all suggest the atmosphere of *The Tale of Genji* (to which the title, the opening poem, and the plot itself allude) darkened by the influence of modern psychological fiction.

The cruel but irresistible temptress appears as the heroine of Tanizaki's first short story, and reappears, along with her willing victims, in nearly everything else he wrote. Sometimes she is set off against women of contrasting temperament, sometimes against a background from the lost world of the past. In *Whirlpool (Manji)*, the *femme fatale* is a beautiful young art student whose features are the model for a drawing of a Bodhisattva but whose actual character is perverse, deceptive, and destructive in the extreme, as she demonstrates in her seduction of a mild-mannered lawyer as well as of his rather aggressive wife. But the setting is Osaka, a city heavy with memories of the old Japan, in contrast to the shallow modernity of Tokyo. The entire novel is narrated in a lush feminine Osaka dialect, symbolic of the langorous charm of the traditional culture, a charm that softens the harsh outlines of this bizarre confession. Later the same year (1928) Tanizaki began serial publication of *Some Prefer Nettles* (*Tade kuu mushi*), in which the protagonist's romantic interest is divided between Louise, an expensive Eurasian prostitute in Yokohama, and the doll-like, solicitous O-hisa, his father-in-law's mistress, who has been meticulously groomed to suit the refined tastes of a conservative Kyoto gentleman. These two women provide alternative attractions to Kaname, a young man whose wife has long ceased to interest him. The rival claims of flashy Western-style Yokohama sensuality and the subdued, enduring appeal of an idealized Japanese beauty imply the cultural conflict between Western influence and the native tradition, between the new and the old, which has been such an engrossing problem in modern Japan.

As in *Some Prefer Nettles* the conflict is always sexualized in Tanizaki's fiction—one aspect of a single-minded devotion, unparalleled in Japanese literature, to the myth of the idolized fatal woman. Everywhere he stresses the sinister role of feminine adornment in working this transformation. Women have been drastically changed, corrupted but freed by those alluring Western garments that encase them in a glowing, resplendent skin, and yet, unlike the constricting trousers, coat, and tie (with stickpin) of European-style men, release their vital powers. And cultural change in general, while less absorbing, has for Tanizaki a considerable degree of morbid fascination. Of course such attitudes are not unknown among

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other Japanese authors, although most of them have a consuming interest in the predominantly masculine society in which they live. Relations between father and son, between brothers, between friends whose wives stay quietly at home, seldom visible, are at the core of most Japanese novels. Even the usual triangle consists of two men and, somewhere in the middle distance, a woman. But cultural conflict may be sensed in almost every modern Japanese novel—not because Japan has failed to assimilate any significant elements of Western culture, but because the process of Westernization (and modernization) has intensified a national self-awareness, a feeling of radical difference, ambivalently superior and inferior, from the intrusive civilization of the remote, inscrutable "foreigners."

In his longest novel *The Makioka Sisters* (*Sasameyuki*—literally, and more poetically, a term for thinly falling snow) Tanizaki depicts with nostalgic affection for detail the life of a once-prosperous Osaka merchant family between the years 1939 and 1941, when it was still possible to believe that suitably arranged marriages could preserve the heritage of the past intact. Most of the book was written during the war; the ironic ending (it appears that the family's future has at last been settled) is the final note of an elegy to a vanished era. A stable former generation has already disappeared by the time the novel opens, and the family continues to disregard even the few conspicuous signs of changing times, such as the austerity edicts and rationing of rice that are mentioned toward the end of the book. Yet within this narrow, decreasingly privileged circle there is still a tension between the old and the new: between the tastes and loyalties of all the sisters, and especially between the conflicting styles of the two unmarried ones, the elder of whom, so reserved as to seem inarticulate, resists marriage by conventionally genteel tactics, while the other, given to elopements and dangerous liaisons, has the independent spirit of a thoroughly modern young woman. Except in reference to some chance foreign neighbors, however, the ominous public events of the day seem unreal, hardly worth mentioning at all. They lack even the briefly noted reality of the student demonstrations (the 1960 Security Pact demonstrations, it may be assumed) in *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, where the blocked streets cause some inconvenience in driving downtown to a restaurant after the theater. And such an atmosphere of isolation from all but personal matters is not peculiar to Tanizaki's novels. Disillusionment and retreat from in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

volvement with public issues have been important tendencies in Japanese literature since Meiji; they reflect a widespread anxiety, especially acute among intellectuals, over the political and social problems of modern Japan. Withdrawal into the world of the past or into the preoccupations of private life is not only a novelist's stratagem and a response to unsettling change, but a long-established mode of minimizing the pressures of a tightly organized society.

In his essays and memoirs Tanizaki often writes movingly of the past, and of the losses suffered in the course of Japan's headlong modernization. Through his own work he has done much to preserve traditional values, notably by his twice-revised modern version of *The Tale of Genji* and by his various stories and novels in a limpid classical vein. But he has no sentimental illusions about turning back from the doubtful, if not disastrous, path of Western-style progress, only a regret for what has been lost along the way. It is in the arts and in surviving customs and manners that one may hope to find some benefit from cultural continuity. Thus Tanizaki's historical tales are far from romantic escapism, just as those with contemporary settings always imply a living connection with the past. Throughout his fiction, problems of technique are solved with the restrained, sure taste of a craftsman in a well-defined tradition.

In characterization, for instance, Tanizaki's art has a closer affinity with traditional life and letters than with the practices of the Western novelists who have influenced him. Even *Some Prefer Nettles,* written in his more naturalistic manner, discloses its meanings delicately and tentatively, with a certain reticent decorum. Faithful to the texture of the life he deals with, Tanizaki shows a well-bred preference for hinting at feelings rather than seeking to penetrate the innermost mysteries of his characters. That is also true of *The Key,* and of such a massive realist novel as *The Makioka Sisters,* in which he might have been expected to use the privilege of omniscience to tell us far more than he does about the motives and reflections of his principal characters. After witnessing many incidents, being told of still others, and overhearing endless conversations, we may yet feel that we are only superficially acquainted with this declining Osaka family: the shadowy, idealized Yukiko, her scandalously impulsive younger sister, the ineffectual men, and even the central figure, Sachiko, who is portrayed without the tinge of fantasy that makes the others seem at home in Tanizaki's larger fictional world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Perhaps, it has been suggested, so much attention to the surfaces of life results from the characters' own unawareness of any deeper feelings, their inner lives being governed by the same oppressive forces as their social behavior. Yet there is no lack of evidence, not least in literature and the drama, of the frequent Japanese failure to dam up "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." What seems more likely is that such techniques of characterization reflect a preference for intuitive ways of knowing, whether in solitary thought or in interpersonal relations. From a slight gesture, a fleeting expression, a change in tone, or a verbal hint there may come a sudden revelation more significant than an overt act or declaration of sentiment. Once, in criticizing a novel by Nagai Kafū, Tanizaki commented wistfully: "Such things as psychological description, the expression of emotions and states of consciousness, the attempt to penetrate deep into the interior of a character, have come into fashion only very recently."[1] Often in his own novels Tanizaki preferred to rely on the reader's intuition to fill out a seemingly inadequate characterization. And other major novelists have used similar techniques.

In Kawabata Yasunari's *Snow Country* (*Yukiguni*) the climactic scene between Shimamura and the geisha Komako turns on a single word: after having affectionately called her "a good girl," and having been obliquely reminded that he once asked her to bring a prostitute for him, Shimamura feels a wave of sensual attraction and calls her "a good woman," which she correctly and despairingly interprets as marking the limit of his commitment to their love affair. As self-centered as he is, Shimamura soon comes to realize why his innocent remark provoked an outburst from her, but the Western reader may well find this a puzzling nuance. Even the Japanese, though finely attuned to just such faint implications, are often enough betrayed by their trust in intuitive understanding. For Kawabata, however, sensitivity to emotional nuance, the frequent misunderstandings that nevertheless occur, and the resulting possibilities for literary expression—all this fragile network of communication is at once an invaluable technical resource and a subject that illustrates his recurrent theme of loneliness and human isolation. Instead of analyzing his characters at length, he prefers to hint at their inner life by noting gestures, fragments of dialogue, momentary feelings. Thus, in revising the beginning chapter of *Snow Country* for book publication, Kawabata deleted several paragraphs describing Komako's first impression of Shimamura,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her past experience with men, her present uncertainty—and replaced the whole passage (following the sentence "She opened his hand, and pressed her cheek against it") by the single phrase: " 'This remembered me?' " In its context, it is sufficient.

To be sure, such economies are offset by a tendency to extend the context, to add more and more episodes, each brilliantly elliptical and evocative but joined to the others by the suggestive illogicalities of Japanese poetry rather than as parts of an architectonic whole. Kawabata's novels rarely come to a decisive ending —he has the habit of adding episodes from time to time over the years—and their slow growth often seems to occur by a process of natural accretion. Like several of his other novels, *Snow Country* was originally intended to be a short story. The material stretched over into a second installment, published the same month (January, 1935) but in a magazine with a slightly later deadline. Further chapters were added—two more toward the end of the year, two in 1936, and so on—until after numerous extensions and revisions a presumably final version was published in 1947. This is doubtless an extreme case of dilatory lyricism, but even under the journalistic pressure of producing serial fiction for magazines or newspapers, most Japanese novelists write without a plan or with only the sketchiest of notes to indicate the way ahead. Mishima Yukio, though unusual for his careful advance preparation of materials, has remarked on the pleasurable spontaneity of a serial novel which has proceeded without plan and has been enriched by unforeseen complications. In his own work, once he has finished the preliminary stages and written a novel straight through, he makes it a point to eschew revision. If few novelists are as close to the traditional *haiku* aesthetic as Kawabata, or as loath to revise as Mishima, many more share a preference for lyrical improvisation as a working method.

Early in his career Kawabata wrote a number of very brief tales—miniature *contes* were then in vogue—which he hoped to make the prose equivalent of the Japanese poetic forms. He later called them his "youthful poetry." But he continued to write occasional three- or four-page stories after others had abandoned the genre; some of these remain among his favorite works. Often they recount dreams, hallucinatory fables, curiously enigmatic anecdotes, but even the slightest of his sketches and vignettes convey an emotional state with extraordinary vividness. Imagery of the sort found in *haiku* may provide an essential element. Thus, the "Pome-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

granates" (*Zakuro*) of the title of a story written in 1943 suggest the complex feelings of a girl toward her mother, her dead father, and her lover who is going off to war. Overnight the pomegranate leaves have fallen, dislodged in a strangely neat circle by a cold late autumn wind, and the suddenly revealed ripe fruit calls to mind the time of year her father had died, as other memories associated with pomegranates awaken a sense of guilt over her mother's empty life and her own secret joy. A tree in the garden or a wide, lonely landscape may be equally effective in expressing the awareness of time, place, and human feelings that is indispensable to the *haiku.*

Again, in *Snow Country* the natural setting not only creates mood and atmosphere but helps to define character. The mountain background, freshly green in spring, darkening in late autumn, then bright in snow, adds to the emotional significance of the work. Sometimes by poignant contrast, it heightens Shimamura's half-bored erotic longing, even his pleasure in Komako and his interest in her friend Yoko, but it also echoes the varying kinds of loneliness that afflict them all. Natural imagery in the *haiku* manner vivifies the foreground as well, with a symbolic relevance to the human situation that goes beyond fragmentary visual metaphor to help compose a harmonious world in which nature is neither adversary nor merely the setting for an unrelated drama. A sensuous, intuitive response to people and places may at times incline the Japanese novelist to create a series of beautiful but static pictures, like the *tableaux vivants* at moments of dramatic tension in the Nō and Kabuki, and to show various facets of his characters as if they had "suddenly and briefly caught his attention, not because of any personal quality they possessed in their own right, but because they seemed at the moment to be such an integral part of the mood of the scene around them."[2] Kawabata in particular often seems to construct even his more dramatic novels by linking one impressionistic scene to the next in the associative manner of *renga* ("linked verse"), the historical precursor of the *haiku.* Lyrical and imagistic, where Tanizaki would be drawn rather to the manner of the mellifluous discursive essay, Kawabata is another of the major Japanese novelists who have mastered Western fictional techniques without abandoning the resources of the native tradition.

Kawabata's career began in the early 1920's, and his writings are often directly influenced by experimental Western fiction. But his most obvious importations—of a "stream of consciousness" style, for instance—are his least successful. Only when an exotic tech-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nique has been fully assimilated to the needs of his essentially Japanese art is it adequate to express his own haunting themes of loneliness, the fragility of love, the cold, interstellar distances of withdrawal from human involvements. In the exquisite opening passage of *Snow Country* when Shimamura sees a girl's face reflected against the evening landscape in the window of the train, there is a cinematic movement to the scene—the heart of the passage is a flashback, and the novel advances by moving back and forth in time. But there is also a vision which accommodates surrealist imagery, pointillist detail, unusual camera angles, and the laws of optics to the familiar natural symbolism of the *haiku:*

> The light inside the train was not particularly strong, and the reflection was not as clear as it would have been in a mirror. Since there was no glare, Shimamura came to forget that it was a mirror he was looking at. The girl's face seemed to be out in the flow of the evening mountains.
>
> It was then that a light shone in the face. The reflection in the mirror was not strong enough to blot out the light outside, nor was the light strong enough to dim the reflection. The light moved across the face, though not to light it up. It was a distant, cold light. As it sent its small ray through the pupil of the girl's eye, as the eye and light were superimposed one on the other, the eye became a weirdly beautiful bit of phosphorescence on the sea of evening mountains.[3]

Somehow the effect is closer to the vision of a *haiku* poet (such as Issa, who observed "the distant hills mirrored in the eye of the dragonfly") than to Bunuel or Breton.

If Shimamura is a cold, withdrawn figure, one who prefers to witness life through an estranging window, Komako is depicted with all the empathy and mastery of feminine psychology that is characteristic of Kawabata's art. Frustrated women, subtly corrupted or disfigured women, especially very young girls who are destined to unhappiness—these are among the unforgettable portraits in his work. Youth is associated with lost love, with parting, with death. No doubt his elegiac themes may be traced back to his own childhood experience of the early loss of both his parents, followed not long after by the deaths of his grandmother, his only sister, and then the grandfather with whom he lived alone from the age of seven till fourteen. Funerals and separations occur in many of his earliest stories. Yet even his darkest fiction suggests a strongly sensuous response to life. Kawabata's eroticism is as much at conflict with death and decay as Tanizaki's, despite all the differences between them. In *Sleeping Beauty* (*Nemureru bijo*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and other recent works, these related themes become as explicit as in the late novels of Tanizaki. But Kawabata's "sleeping beauties" never awaken—they are heavily drugged young girls placed at the disposal of the old men who visit a special club. The single developed character, a man painfully sensitive to the anomalies of this sad pleasure, is left alone with his sensuous impressions of the girls, with his memories of other women, his dreams and nightmares, and, finally, with death. The novel offers a striking example of severe reduction in fictional paraphernalia, of poetic economy which increases the value of every glimpse into the interior world of a character.

For Kawabata, and also for Tanizaki and other perceptive Japanese novelists, even the microcosm of the family is no longer a secure refuge either from the menacing outer world beyond private experience or from the sorrows, frustrations, and bad dreams of the lonely, labyrinthine inner world. Like most serious novelists since Meiji, they have tried to explore that inner world; they have followed any path, old or new, which promised to lead into it. Gifted younger writers such as Abe Kōbō and Oe Kenzaburō are finding still newer paths, paths that often resemble those of their contemporaries abroad. These novelists are also interested in the larger world of political and social change, if not in the changing conditions of family life. Their journeys into the interior seem rapid, purposeful, and comparatively well-organized—perhaps at the sacrifice of random insight as well as of leisurely grace. But in their work, too, it is possible to discern traditional qualities that mark it unmistakably as Japanese. Fortunately, like the Nō and the *haiku*, the novel in Japan has been strengthened by a long literary tradition of economy, restraint, and poetic sensitivity. Without that source of strength, modern Japanese literature might well have been overrun rather than regenerated to new and vigorous growth by the aimless luxuriant tangle of Western-influenced writing which once seemed likely to obliterate the past.

References

1. Edward Seidensticker, *Kafū the Scribbler* (Stanford, 1965), p. 131.
2. Edwin McClellan, "The Impressionistic Tendency in Some Modern Japanese Writers," *Chicago Review*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1965), p. 58.
3. Translated by Edward Seidensticker. *Snow Country* (New York, 1956), p. 10.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GEORGE N. SFEIR

The Contemporary Arabic Novel

I. *Evolving a New Medium*

THE NOVEL, unlike poetry, is a very recent development in Arabic literary expression. About fifty years old, the Arabic novel is largely the product of the modernization or Westernization that had begun some fifty or seventy-five years earlier. Its first authors were, in the main, young expatriates who suddenly found themselves face to face with the modern ways of Europe and America.

For the *émigré* and for the student in New York, Paris, or London, it was a time for assimilation and interpretation, without the constraints of a society that had no meaning for them save that they belonged to it. What Europe provided to the American expatriate of the 1920's, America provided to the Lebanese and Syrian *émigrés* of the same period. In the words of the last surviving member of their circle, Mikhail Na'imah, "a handful of men gathered in one place at the same time to deliver a message which was due to be delivered and they were equipped to do it." Among them were Rihani, Gibran, and Na'imah. Their message concerned new forms and techniques, new ideas. They had discovered a whole new world to convey through Arabic literature.

Who were better equipped than the returning students to tackle the intriguing, indeed inspiring, problems arising out of the confrontation of the traditional, conventional life by the alien, yet more rational, modern ways? To these nascent writers no problem was more pressing than the issue of social change and conflicting cultural values. Here was the breeding ground of the modern Arabic novel, an experimental, adolescent novel. It was declamatory in style, direct in its message, proudly and unabashedly autobiographical in its approach. Among the best of these novels are Yahya Haqqi's *Qindil Umm Hashim* (*Umm Hashim's Lantern*), Ibrahim Abd al Qader al Mazini's *Ibrahim al Katib* (*Ibrahim, the Scribe*), Gibran's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Al Ajnihah al Mutakassirah (*The Broken Wings*), Taha Hussein's *Al Ayyam* (*The Stream of Days*), Taufiq al Hakim's *'Usfur Min al Sharq* (*A Bird from the East*), and Mohammad Husayn Haykal's *Zaynab*. The latter, which first appeared in 1917, was destined to become a literary milestone in modern Arabic literature. Critics later turned to it and said: "It is the first work in Arabic that one can really call a novel." *Zaynab* describes the life of the peasant and his village. This theme recurs throughout modern Arabic writing, but for Egyptian writers it assumes a national dimension that is unparalleled in other Arab countries. In Egypt, as in Silone's Italy, the village and the city have coexisted side by side, separate and distinct—like two different worlds, with no communication between them save in the silent dialogue of jealousy, distrust, and fear.

The most recent major novel treating this theme is Abd al Rahman al Sharqawi's *Al Ard* (*The Earth*). Its appearance gave Egypt's post-revolutionary critics a welcome work with which to compare and condemn pre-revolutionary writing. They claimed that novels such as *Zaynab* were static and bourgeois, that they sought only to record and perpetuate the feudal conditions of the Egyptian fellah.

Al Ard was published fifty years after *Zaynab*. During that half century, European and American literature was undergoing rapid change. Arab writers continued to be influenced by Western literature, but were also experimenting on their own. They have tried their hand at the conventional novel and the *nouveau roman*, partaking of romanticism and existentialism, indulging in socialist realism and in themes of the absurd. The generation of the experimentalists and the innovators of the decades following World War I were succeeded in the forties and fifties by a new breed of writers—writers who were more sophisticated in their approach to the social problems of their time and broader in their interests. Unlike their predecessors, these writers lacked a common cause and did not form a single group or school. They scattered in pursuit of the many and varied problems of modernization. Their awareness of these problems was only partly the result of their immediate experience; it also stemmed from their readings of such modern masters as Gorki, Dostoevski, Joyce, Kafka, Sartre, Camus, Mann, Silone, Hemingway, and Faulkner.

Although Arab writers readily employed and excelled in the short story, their development and perfection of the novel proved

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

slower. Not only is a half century a short time for the maturation of such a complex medium as the novel, but its progress is intimately tied to changes in society, to social and intellectual development. Furthermore, the dichotomy in the Arabic language between the spoken and the written word frustrates any realistic and genuine rendition of dialogue. This is perhaps the hardest problem which Arab writers face today—a problem they will have to struggle with for a long time to come. Nevertheless, the novel in Arabic, despite its deficiencies in technique and form, has now caught up with the times.

II. *Taufiq al Hakim with Some References to Taha Hussein*

This half century of literary development produced two Egyptian writers of great stature: Taha Hussein, a novelist and critic, and Taufiq al Hakim, a novelist and dramatist. Despite the partial parting of the ways in their literary careers, they present a strange similarity of themes in their fictional works. For both, the issue of social change and the conflict of cultures is paramount.

After qualifying for the bar in Egypt in 1923, al Hakim journeyed West to Paris, the intellectual and artistic center of Europe at that time. The rich literary life of France opened al Hakim's mind and heart to human associations unknown in his limited and restricted milieu at home. Out of this enriching encounter came *A Bird from the East,* a euphemism for Muhsin, a young man who journeyed from the Middle East to the West. Although this novel was written some ten years after his return to Egypt, in it al Hakim draws extensively on his personal experiences during his student days in Paris.

Muhsin's reaction to the superior and alien culture of Europe varies. Some times he is defensive; other times, understanding and receptive. His attitude reflects the passionate struggle raging within him—the struggle between the pride of belonging to a rich ancient culture and the recognition of the more rational and advanced ways of modern Europe. Stylistically it represents a dialogue similar to that in André Malraux's *The Temptation of the West.* The correspondence between A. D. and Ling in *The Temptation of the West* also focuses on several of the arguments that al Hakim allows to develop between Muhsin and his French woman friend, on the one hand, and between him and a Russian *émigré,* on the other.

Whatever its technical weaknesses, *A Bird from the East,* like

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

most of the Arabic works of that epoch, dramatizes the experience of a new generation of Arabs who confronted European ways and concepts for the first time, with a freshness and youthfulness all their own.

Taha Hussein, who left the traditionalist Al Azhar University of Cairo to continue his studies at the Sorbonne, also draws upon his personal experiences in his novel *Adib* (*A Man of Letters*), published in 1935. Typical of the writers of the period, both al Hakim and Hussein record through their protagonists their own impressions of French life, their inner conflicts and outspoken arguments with European ways, and their love for a French woman.

The dialogue between the relative virtues of East and West (speaking in a cultural rather than a political sense) is recurrent in the Arabic writing of the past fifty years. It has assumed varying forms: soul versus mind, spiritualism versus materialism, humanism versus mechanization—with the East laying sole claim to the first of the contending concepts and the West (Europe and America) invariably identified with the second.

Al Hakim indulges in this argument in his major novel *Awdat al Ruh* (*The Return of the Spirit*, or *The Resurrection*). Here the dialogue is between two Europeans, a Britisher and a Frenchman, rather than between a European and an Easterner. It is almost as if al Hakim seeks to produce objective outside evidence to prove the superiority of the Eastern soul vis-à-vis the European mind, which, according to the author, is all that Europe can brag about. "Europe's strength lies in its mind, that limited instrument which one has to augment by will power. Egypt's strength lies in its heart which is limitless."

In *The Resurrection* al Hakim again sends his protagonist on a journey, this time into the national past of his own land in search of the spiritual and cultural sources of his national ethos. Al Hakim maintains that this ethos derives from the residue of the ancient culture and that it is still present and alive in his people's consciousness. "I do not have a recent past. I am compelled to penetrate the ancient past which is about to disappear under the sands of time," says al Hakim.

The protagonist in *The Resurrection* is the son of rich landowners. He fails both in mitigating his parents' contempt (particularly his mother's) for the peasants who work for them and in ignoring the suspicions aroused in him by rumors about the girl he loved. Eventually he finds satisfaction and fulfillment in revolutionary acts

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

against the alien rulers of his land. In the revolution, al Hakim seems to be saying, Egypt finds her resurrection. He borrows his symbolism from the oldest known Egyptian script, "The Book of the Dead," and applies it to the modern reawakening of Egypt that the revolution of 1919 represents. In a frontispiece to his novel, al Hakim draws on "The Book of the Dead" by quoting Isis' pleadings over the dismembered body of Osiris:

> Rise up Osiris, rise,
> I am Horus, your son
> I come to bring you back to life
> You still have your heart
> Your heart of the ancient past.

Like *A Bird from the East, The Resurrection* is partly autobiographical, depicting much of al Hakim's experiences in his childhood and early youth. Like his protagonist, Muhsin, al Hakim spent his childhood on his father's country estate where his mother's contempt for the peasants working for them annoyed him terribly. He was later sent to Cairo to stay at his uncle's home while attending school there. It was in Cairo that he, like Muhsin, became involved with his uncle in the 1919 revolution and was imprisoned for a time.

Following the parallel that curiously exists in the fictional works of al Hakim and Taha Hussein, Taha Hussein's *Al Ayyam* (*The Stream of Days*) records his childhood and adolescent experiences in his village home and during his early schooling in Cairo. Over and above their contribution to the early development of the novel in Arabic, these works provide important source materials for an investigation of Egypt's social conditions during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Al Hakim's use of mythology as a source for his themes on the human condition is particularly evident in his plays. *Ahl Al Kahf* (*The People of the Cave*) is based on the "Seven Sleepers of Ephesus" as related in the Koran. The sleepers come to life after three hundred years only to be disillusioned with what has happened to the world and the faith in the interval. They decide to return to the world of the dead because for them life in the present—without a living past—is, in any case, equivalent to death.

In both *The People of the Cave* and *The Resurrection*, al Hakim develops his outlook on Egyptian life. He explores the Egyptian's built-in resistance to disintegration, to the corrosive effect of time. In *The Resurrection* al Hakim, speaking through a French archae-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ologist working in Egypt, says that the Egyptian people continue until this day to harbor the spirit of the temple. In saying this he alludes to the symbolic significance of the pyramid in Egyptian life and history—the Egyptians' spirit of resistance and their need for an object of worship in times of crises. "Truly, Mr. Blake," the Frenchman admonishes his British friend, "you should not underestimate this people. They have the potential strength. All they need is one thing—someone to worship. They need a man of their own who would personify all their passions and hopes."

Al Hakim resolved his earlier concern with the conflict of cultures as an enlightened liberal would: by the inevitable recognition of the unity of mankind. And if he concerns himself with the past, he does so only to enrich the present, never to deny the merits of progress. The condition of man here and now concerns al Hakim. On this issue he is in agreement with Taha Hussein, who, in *The Future of Culture in Egypt,* portrays the cultural make-up of his land as the result of the confluence of various streams of civilizations throughout its long history.

Al Hakim treats the cleavage that separates the life of the city from that of the village as a tolerant liberal would. His critique of the sumptuous but empty values of the vain aristocracy is devoid of the vengeful bitterness of the radical but is not unmindful of the outworn irrational ways of the fellah.

He evokes this attitude effectively in *Yawmiyat Na'ib fil Aryaf* (*The Diary of a Representative in the Country*). After his return from France, al Hakim was appointed Assistant Public Prosecutor in the Delta region where he spent five years; *The Diary* is based on a diary in which al Hakim recorded his experiences during those years. The protagonist of *The Diary* sets out to solve a simple murder case. But he is faced with apathetic villagers and reluctant witnesses. The day-to-day account of the Public Prosecutor brings to mind in smaller or greater degree a baffling comitragic paradigm of Kafka's *The Trial* without, however, its terror and enigma. Here in the world of Egypt's fellah, peasants are tried for crimes they are unaware of committing and according to laws they cannot possibly comprehend. Life is hazardous and puzzling, but there is a relieving sense of simplicity and jest that renders al Hakim's work no less amusing for being a stinging satire on the life of the judge and the accused alike.

Taha Hussein's treatment of this theme is also essential to his fictional endeavor. He is even more directly concerned than al

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hakim with the social and economic plight of the fellah. In *Du'a' al Kayrawan* (*The Call of the Nightingale*) and *Shajarat al Bu's* (*The Tree of Misery*), he exposes not only the vicious exploitation of the innocent fellah at the hands of the more sophisticated urbanite, but also the equally vicious social customs that retard the progress of the fellah. This is evident in both *The Call of the Nightingale* and *The Tree of Misery*. In the former a father kills his daughter to cleanse the dishonor she brought upon his house by her innocent submission to her employer; in the latter, an overly dominant father forces his son into a marriage of interest.

In his latest novel, *Al Mu'adhdhabun fil Ard* (*The Wretched of the Earth*), Taha Hussein directs his attack at social injustice in whatever quarter he finds it. Published in 1951 in Lebanon, this work remained banned in Egypt until the fall of King Farouk in 1952.

The image of Egypt's millions of toiling and disinherited peasants—the burden and the bearers of Egypt's long and tortuous history—is well embedded in the conscience of Egyptian writers. The theme is peculiarly Egyptian, which places many an Egyptian writer in the tradition of Russian authors from Gogol to Sholokhov. As al Hakim himself has pointed out, it is the fellah who is the true embodiment of the Egyptian soul, and it is he who symbolizes Egypt's eternal existence. Without an awareness and understanding of this consciousness, any critique of the work of Egyptian writers would remain incomprehensible and incomplete.

III. *Nagib Mahfouz*

Mahfouz belongs to the second generation of Arab writers concerned with the novel form. This generation followed that of al Hakim and his pioneering colleagues and was not uninfluenced by them. But, like immigrants to a new world, the generation of al Hakim labored under the divisive loyalties between a new and an old world, between a modern and a traditional life, between the here and the there that was their literary as well as their cultural and social experience. Mahfouz and his generation are more at home, more familiar with the adopted medium and ideas. Gone are the embarrassment, the self-consciousness, and the divided loyalties of the immigrant. Not only did Mahfouz avoid discussing the conflicts of cultures, he also steered away from the rural-urban confrontations. His subject matter is the city, his own city Cairo, to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which he wholly belongs and where he never ceases to enjoy mingling with its people, frequenting its cafés, strolling through its neighborhood streets. His best-known works draw on the names of Cairo's neighborhoods for their titles—*Khan al Khalili, Zuqaq al Madaqq,* and *Bayn al Qasrayn* and its two companion volumes, *Qasr al Shawq* and *al Sukkariyah,* which form his celebrated trilogy. In these novels and others not mentioned, Mahfouz deals with the urban middle class during the period immediately after World War I until the decade following the end of World War II. In his mid-fifties, Mahfouz, not unlike Dos Passos, is the chronicler of his country at mid-century.

The trilogy, the first volume of which won the Egyptian state prize for literature in 1956, is a monumental work in the tradition of Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga.* In its theme and its treatment of changing times, however, the trilogy is closer to Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks;* Mann is Mahfouz's favorite author. It is the long and intricate saga of a middle-class Cairene family. Its head, Ahmad Abd al Jawad, symbolizes an age and a tradition, both of which die with him by the beginning of World War II. During his life Abd al Jawad manages to lead a dual existence. At home he is the conservative, domineering, unbending father; outside, the libertine, frivolous man of pleasure. His obedient and dutiful wife exists in a world that never extends beyond the walls of her home; his two daughters and three sons are caught in the web of shifting traditions, the uncertainties of values in a changing society. Their fate is typical of Egypt's youth between the two world wars. The eldest, Yassin, like his father outside the home, is frivolous and irresponsible, indulging his own selfish pleasures. The middle son, Fahmi, is a young patriot whose life is cut short by British bullets quelling a student demonstration. The youngest, Kamal, an introspective student of philosophy, becomes a writer; he leads an untiring search for a more meaningful existence in a milieu of shifting values. This is presumably a picture of the author himself. In fact, Mahfouz admits that the personality of Kamal reflects his own "intellectual crisis." Indeed, it reflects the crisis of an entire generation of intelligentsia who grew to maturity during the decade following the late 1930's. During this period Egypt was sovereign but not independent, enlightened with European ideas but dragged down by the weight of underdevelopment, aristocrats and ruffians, sumptuousness and suffering, fun and frustration. Many of that generation either identified themselves with the European Left or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

became resigned and stood aloof from the events of Egyptian life. Thus, when the revolution of 1952 broke out, they were taken by surprise and virtually left behind. Even the leftists among them could not find accommodation in the socialism of the new order. Mahfouz more than any other modern Egyptian writer fills us in on the background of what has occurred on the Egyptian scene since 1952.

The events in Mahfouz's trilogy fall short of the 1952 revolution. They follow an orderly chronological sequence from their original setting in 1914 through the 1940's. They move on a wide front, sweeping before them the entire urban community, sometimes dramatically and turbulently, sometimes softly and sensually. These events capture not only the lives of the personalities in the novel, but the conditions and the spirit of the entire neighborhood as well. They encompass two or three generations of these inhabitants. Time alone emerges as the true and lasting hero.

Time is cardinal to Mahfouz's literary themes and technique. But his is not the concept of time born of the stream of consciousness that one finds in the works of Thomas Wolfe or Marcel Proust, not time recaptured through subjective remembrance of things past. "Time," Mahfouz has said, "is apparent only in its historic sequence, and then through living social experience." The various protagonists of his novels are invariably caught in the ever-present life triangle of overwhelming circumstances, constrictive conventions, and endless time. But, despite the certainty of their failures and frustrations, they manage to marshal that last ounce of power necessary to make the ultimate gesture of rebellion. Mahfouz's heroes are driven by a burning desire not so much to free themselves of their temporal confines as to overcome their social estrangement and to achieve reconciliation with their milieu. This is particularly apparent in his post-neighborhood novels. It is the primary motivation of Sa'id Mahran, the hero of *Al Liss wal Kilab* (*The Thief and the Dogs*), who seeks to alter a despicable social reality and to make it conform to a more desirable social ideal. It is also the theme of *Al Summan wal Kharif* (*The Quail and Autumn*), in which the hero, 'Isa, is caught in a struggle between his reason which dictates an acceptance of the new order born of the 1952 revolution, and the yearnings of his heart for the old values which have been by-passed or deliberately destroyed by the new order.

The Thief and the Dogs is a Sartrian work of dark and lonely life. The hero, Sa'id Mahran, has just been released from prison

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

after serving a sentence for larceny. He leaves prison intent on seeking revenge for the wrongs committed by his wife and Isma'il Hilmi, his friend and former schoolmate. His wife had abandoned him to take up with Hilmi, who is now a successful publisher. Hilmi had urged Sa'id Mahran to commit the crime by convincing him that, unlike stealing from the poor, stealing from the rich is not a crime. Sa'id fails in his efforts for revenge and only gets himself into trouble with the police. They finally corner him in a cemetery where he takes his own life. In the interval, Sa'id Mahran is abandoned and lonely. He tries to find solace and understanding in the company of an old cleric, but the holy man's purposes and ideals are not of this world. His sole friend and companion turns out to be a prostitute named Nur, which in Arabic connotes light. Although he treats her with disregard and disdain, she labors to provide him with food and shelter and remains faithful to him to the end. She refuses, despite police torture, to betray him. In Sa'id Mahran's world of depraved "dogs," only the prostitute Nur is human and understanding. This he realizes only toward the end. The narrator says:

> He shall not see Nur again and felt himself strangled with desperation and was overtaken by sadness, not because he shall soon lose his secure refuge, but because he shall lose a heart, a compassion and a fellowship. . . . He now realized that his feelings for her were much deeper than he had thought, that she was an indivisible part of his life now torn and tottering over the edge of the abyss. He shut his eyes in the dark and confessed a silent confession of his love for her.

The prostitute is a familiar figure in many of Mahfouz's novels. In *Bidayah Wa Nihayah* (*A Beginning and an End*), published in 1942, her name is Sana', and in *The Quail and Autumn*, published in 1962, she is Riri. Invariably she is a woman compelled by dire need and unfortunate circumstances to accept this degrading fate. But at the crucial moment in the story the reader always discovers how loving, loyal, and uncompromising she can be. One wonders whether in the person of this downtrodden, contemptible prostitute Mahfouz is not chastising the state of morals in Arab society today where, in the face of stringent conventions, hypocrisy is not unknown.

Mahfouz is also vitally concerned with socialism and religion. "For some," he says, "socialism could be the elimination of obstacles that stand in the way of God's justice." In saying this, Mahfouz, the realist and the socialist, is reconciled with his religious background. To Islam and to Marxism, history and the building of the good so-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ciety are important. Islam's acute consciousness of the transcendental imbues it, however, with a morality repudiated by the atheism of Marxism. Atheism has failed to establish itself in Arab thought and literature; God is alive in all his glory. When Rushdi 'Akef, Mahfouz's protagonist in *Khan al Khalili,* finds himself face to face with death as a result of an incurable disease, he seeks solace in the Koran, in the Word of God. And when Ahmad 'Akef goes to the Department of Health to obtain the necessary release for the burial of his brother, he is appalled by the cold routine approach of the government official who receives his request and processes the papers. "How could he," Ahmad 'Akef complains, "approach death in this nonchalant way when it is the greatest event in the world."

In *Awlad Haritna* (*The Kids of Our Neighborhood*) the religious theme is unmistakably present. In fact, the work is an allegory on the story of creation and the development of the prophetic religions. It is, in essence, the story of all neighborhoods everywhere; the setting is universal. The grandfather, al Jabalawi, who lives to be a hundred or more, resides with his family in a large garden mansion at the edge of the desert, a modern terrestrial garden of Eden. One day he calls on all his sons in order to select an heir and administrator for the estate. His choice falls on the youngest son; the eldest, bitterly disappointed, rebels against his father's decision and is consequently expelled from the garden. Eventually the youngest is also expelled for having connived with the eldest to reveal to him the text of the will. From then on, the family multiplies, and its members form an entire neighborhood. Their concern revolves around the property and al Jabalawi's "ten conditions, over which great debates have taken place and were the cause of all the conflict in our neighborhood ever since." One of the grandsons, 'Arafah, develops the power of magical healing in the name of al Jabalawi. He is sought by the usurper of the property, attempts to flee, but is betrayed by a woman friend and eventually killed. 'Arafah's body is raised from the grave by his civilian followers who refuse to believe the accusations leveled against him and fight against the usurper's partisans. "We have nothing to do with the past," they declare. "Our hope lies in the magic of 'Arafah and if we were given the choice between al Jabalawi and magic, we would choose magic."

The Kids of Our Neighborhood was the object of varied and contradictory comment. The religiously-minded condemned it as a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

work of profanity. They accused Mahfouz of committing the unforgivable sin of personifying God, creation, and the prophets. To Mahfouz, the allegory merely presents a philosophical critique of the moral state of the family of nations. He contrasts his style in this novel to that of Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*. Swift, he says, uses myth to criticize reality, whereas he, Mahfouz, uses reality to criticize myth by giving myth the attributes of existing reality.

The Kids of Our Neighborhood also heralds the changes that have occurred in Mahfouz's technique and themes since the publication of his novels of the neighborhoods and the historical novels that preceded them. Leaving behind the techniques and themes of socialist realism, he began to deal with the experience and fate of man as man. He did this at a time when "socialist realism" and "socialist critique" were the forms of writing officially sanctioned in Egypt, and when many promising young writers, carried away by the new political winds, were promoting ideological commitment.

Mahfouz, however, rejects any categorization of his style and denies that it has undergone change. He admits that he is a realist. But realism, he explains, treats the realities of life in a particular period of time and in a way that reflects the social ideas dominant at that time. Natalie Sarraut, speaking for her colleagues in the French *nouveau roman* school, would agree with him completely.

The Quail and Autumn is the only novel by Mahfouz that uses the revolution of 1952 as a background. *The Quail and Autumn* is the story of 'Isa, a respectable upper-class politician in the old regime who suddenly finds himself deprived of his status by the revolution. He loses his government job and his socialite fiancée. He finally abandons his home and, turning his back on Cairo, on his past, moves to Alexandria. There he lives in the Greek quarter, where he hopes to lose himself among "you all who are strangers in an alien land." He languishes in idle despair, sitting in cafés and walking along the waterfront. By the seashore he watches "the bevies of quail swooping down to an inevitable fate after a tedious journey full of illusory heroism."

Eventually 'Isa befriends a simple streetwalker called Riri who, like himself, has abandoned her people and home town and dares not return. He sees in her life a reflection of his own condition, and, consequently, he is often brutal to her and coldly avoids her when he realizes that she is bearing his child. He refuses to go along with the plans of his friends who try to set him up in a job. Despite all his efforts, he is unable to escape the past. "The truth is that my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mind is sometimes convinced of the revolution, but my heart is always with the past. And the problem is whether there could be a reconciliation between my heart and my mind." He is finally pushed into a marriage of interest, which only leads him into deeper despair. He eventually seeks out Riri again and comes face to face with their child who is now a grown-up girl. This confrontation moves him to beg Riri to let him come back to her, but she rejects him and elects to stay by the side of the poor shopkeeper who sheltered her as his wife. The author leaves 'Isa's fate vague and undefined, shrouded in the early-morning mist of the story's last day.

Mahfouz's most recent novel, *Al Tariq* (*The Road*), is the story of the protagonist's search for a familiar but unknown image. After thirty years of uneasy and difficult life as an orphan, Saber discovers that his father is alive, but that his whereabouts is unknown. He sets out on a tortuous search to find him, knowing very little about his father, not much more than his name and his title which indicates a sort of religious eminence. Along the way he falls into many absurd situations and eventually into crime and imprisonment. His lost father, like Beckett's Godot, remains elusively beyond reach or recognition.

The Road is a companion to Mahfouz's two preceding works, *The Thief and the Dogs* and *The Quail and Autumn.* In fact, the similarity of the style and theme has led certain critics to view the three novels as another trilogy, one which employs the ideas of existentialism and the themes of the absurd.

IV. *The Political Novel*

The Egyptian revolution of 1952, the Algerian war of independence, and the ferment in Syria and Iraq helped to make the 1950's a decade of radicalism in the Arab world and set the stage for the contemporary political novel. The strong social pressures generated by these events forced writers to seek commitment to and involvement in the political issues of the time. As one post-revolutionary author, Abd al Rahman al Sharqawi, has said, "A writer in this age cannot be just a writer. He must adopt a message. His message should be to defend life, the future of mankind, and the spiritual heritage of our civilization."

When Sharqawi's first major work, *Al Ard* (*The Earth*), appeared, it was hailed by the new literary establishment as a model of revolutionary literature. It dramatized the dormant potentialities,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suppressed aspirations, and usurped rights of the peasant. Above all, it expressed the possibility that the peasant, if he were only given a chance, might be capable of heroic acts. Sharqawi's style became known as "critical realism."

The Earth is a portrait of a village, the village where Sharqawi grew up and to which he periodically returns from Cairo. With a sharp realism reminiscent of Ignazio Silone, Sharqawi relates the life of the peasants, their joys and miseries, their ambitions and disappointments, and the role of the local tax collector, police, and sanitation officials, who represent in the village national authority, as symbolized by the distant capital of Cairo.

To the charge that his realism is dogmatic and springs essentially from a political commitment, Sharqawi replies with unmistakably dogmatic and dialectic fervor:

> Realism is an outlook on life which helps the man of letters to understand the source of life and join in the battle of antithesis which is ever pushing toward progress. Realism makes man understand this contradiction, points out to him the nature of the motivating force and leads him eventually to the outcome of this contradiction which is the future itself.

It should be mentioned that the term *political novel* is used here as a convenient means of identifying a certain wave of politically inspired novels and short stories written during the 1950's, and not for purposes of rigid categorization. Practically all the works that can be labeled *political* have dealt with themes common to the contemporary Arabic novel. The new element, however, is the heroes' unmistakable awareness of the national community, a national interest or cause, and their loyalty to this cause. The writers often return to the past in search of political themes. But whether they treat past history or contemporary events, the end product has invariably been a literature of justification and of rehabilitation.

Following *The Earth*, Sharqawi wrote *Al Shawari' al Khalfiyah* (*Back Streets*), the story of Shukri Abd al 'Al. An Egyptian army officer, Shukri was forcibly retired in 1925 following an argument with his superior, a British officer, over Shukri's refusal to open fire on Egyptian street demonstrators. The events of the story take place in 1935. Shukri, now a widower, lives quietly with his two daughters on 'Aziz Street, a back street of Cairo. He is suddenly recalled to active duty and reinstated in his previous rank, but his primary interest continues to be with the people who live on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'Aziz Street. He solves their problems, reconciles their differences, protects the weak, and finds jobs for the unemployed. He eventually organizes the inhabitants of the street into an effective action group that participates in the 1935 uprising against the British.

Mahmud Taymur, in *The Blue Lanterns*, goes back to World War I to tell the story of an Egyptian woman who leads a double life. She is both Na'imah, the prostitute to the British troops of occupation, and Bahiya, the good woman who tends a sick father and a fatherless son. She separates her two worlds successfully until she falls in love with a young man who visits her in her home as her fiancé and in her business as her lover. He sows the first seeds of revolt in her by reproaching her for selling herself to the troops. When her son is accidentally killed in an anti-British demonstration, Na'imah or Bahiya joins an anti-British underground group and is herself killed. The alternative between despicable self-enrichment through servility to the enemy and honorable self-sacrifice for the national cause is clear. These represented the only choices open to Egyptians at that time.

For Yusuf al-Siba'i, the use of the revolution as the apocalypse toward which his characters are inexorably drawn becomes almost a matter of duty. In the Introduction to his two-volume work, *Rudda Qalbi* (*My Heart Regained*), he says: "It seems to me that the reason for my particular concern with this story is my belief that it is essential that a record be made of those contemporary events which have just taken place in our history."

The fighting in Port Said and the Suez Canal in 1956 gave Egyptian writers a more immediate historic act to treat in their works. The writers exalted the revolution, stressing the virtue of solidarity, selflessness, and sacrifice in the service of the national community. These writers maintain that the individual himself is powerless and insignificant; only by working with and through the group does he or she find strength, achieve self-realization, and rise above the petty to the heroic, a theme well expressed by André Malraux in his *Days of Wrath*. Unlike works by Malraux, the emphasis in the Egyptian novels is on the external, overt act of the protagonist, on his or her attempt to identify with the national cause, a war, a revolution, or merely a limited act of political resistance. The authors seem to be saying that a person achieves compensation for his sacrifices or redemption for his past sins against society through this identification. The most pertinent aspect of the political novel—the personal conflict and the internal tension

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that arises out of this conflict—has somehow escaped these authors. The Egyptian writer, suddenly and unexpectedly faced with a historic act, felt that if he could not explain the act, he should at least try to justify it.

In failing to develop the dramatic possibilities of personal conflict in their work, the Arab writers also avoid the tragic. As Egypt's Yusuf Idriss has explained, the Arab is "unable to weep for a long time or laugh for a long time. Unlike the European, he cannot be completely sad in a moment of sorrow or completely hilarious in a moment of jest: In their eyes are always intermixed the tears of joy and those of sorrow." This is why, he says, comedy and tragedy are European concepts. The Arabs, by contrast, are sensitive to such concepts as honor, sincerity, and loyalty. The violation of any of these is tantamount to a social sin which a simple act of purgation can absolve. For the Arab, there can be no contest with fate. Destiny is preordained, and his soul is not free to violate the moral order that the faithful believe is ideal and complete. In such an order, an act of atonement can absolve the guilty socially, but cannot raise the transgressor above his guilt to a new moral order.

A work by Lebanon's Halim Barakat heralds the beginning of the Arabic political novel in the best sense of the term. Set against the Arab debacle in Palestine, *Sitat Ayyam* (*Six Days*) marks the approaching communion of the heroic act and the tragic experience in the Arabic novel. Halim Barakat weaves his novel around the inner sensibility and inner conflicts of his protagonist, Suhayl.

The six days represent the lease on life that the superior forces of the enemy grant the inhabitants of the small hamlet of Dayr al Bahr in their ultimatum to surrender or face annihilation. During these six days, Barakat, through his protagonist, portrays the crisis faced by the Arab intellectual of that period. The crisis is expressed in all its religious, social, and cultural ramifications. Suhayl defies destiny by struggling against insurmountable odds to uphold his ideals, to be true in his love, and to save his land. He experiences pain, torture, and despair. "It may be hard to commit suicide but it is even harder to face life. Suicide is a passing protest whereas life is a continuing act of protest," he declares.

He joins the partisans in an engagement against the enemy even though he harbors great doubts about the worthiness of their cause, for the partisans are defending a kind of life and society that he despises. He loves Nahidah, a victim of irrational and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

outmoded social and religious conventions. Winning her seems as hopeless as victory in battle. But he remains in the thick of both these battles. Why? That is what he asks himself and tries to resolve. "Why does he love her? To forget boredom. Why does he expose himself to death? To forget boredom. Why defy? To forget boredom. He did not mean what he said about the blessings of death. He wishes only to overcome boredom."

Suhayl is captured by the enemy. Despite the torture he suffers at their hands, he refuses to betray the defense plans of his hamlet. He thinks only of his colleagues and of Nahidah, who, toward the end of the novel, rebels against her parents and runs away to join him only to learn that he has disappeared and is believed to have been killed. The enemy attacks before the ultimatum has expired and takes the hamlet by surprise. Suhayl's colleagues, in a desperate maneuver to defend the village, are all killed.

Written in direct, staccato-like sentences, *Six Days* reflects the development of a new stylistic technique and a higher level of perfection in the Arabic novel. Barakat's work is comparable in craftsmanship and spirit to Marguerite Duras' *Moderato Cantabile.* It is a genuine work, fashioned out of the raw material around which it is woven—the sweet breath of nature that envelops Dayr al Bahr and the sweaty bodies of its inhabitants. The leading characters are tragic loners who, amid the ruins of their place and time, must bear the agony and conflict created by their acute sensitivity.

V. *The Female Revolt*

The cries of boredom and revolt in Barakat's *Six Days* are heard with even greater anguish in the novels of social protest by female Arab writers. The objects of this protest are the social and psychological barriers that continue to restrict the freedom of Arab women and prevent their emancipation.

The pioneer in this revolt was Layla Ba'albaki, a youthful Lebanese barely twenty-one years old. In 1957 she attacked both family and society in her defiant novel *Ana Ahya* (*I Live*). Since then the avalanche of female fiction of social protest has been tremendous. Colette Suhayl in Syria, Sofie Abdullah in Egypt, and many others have adopted a Flaubertian approach to social experience: They have pitted their heroines' lives and experiences against the life and experience of the community.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Colette Suhayl's *Ayyam Ma'ahu* (*Days with Him*) treats the reader to an especially frank statement of the heroine's struggle to consummate her relationship with her lover, free of the emotional repressions and social impediments of a conservative, closely-knit society and its incongruous, all-powerful, ever-present, devouring being—the People. The test of freedom, progress, maturity, and many other things seems to be a woman's ability to associate freely with men.

In *I Live,* Lena, the heroine, makes her position clear from the start. Nothing can restrain her in her quest for total and unfettered freedom to live and love. She tries to break out of her real and psychological chains. In the process, however, she meets and thinks she loves Baha, a fellow student who is himself the captive of a political ideology (he is a Marxist).

But Lena's concern goes beyond mere freedom of association. She yearns for a more meaningful relationship with her fellow beings in order to kill the terrifying sense of absurdity she sees and feels all around her, even in her home. "In my home, I am lost. I am neither Eastern nor Western, neither free nor enslaved." At school she endures the boredom of frustration, watches the meaningless motions of the teacher and students, and turns to daydreaming. At the office where she works, the ever-empty suggestion box she is in charge of symbolizes the emptiness of her life. She walks the streets in search of her identity. "I am an absurd creature cast out on these streets." Then she finds love and thinks she has found herself: "My consolation is that I am in love." But even this fails to satisfy her completely. "I yearn to be lost in the clash of the struggle in Baha's life . . . which would afford me the chance to establish a genuine relationship." Despairing that his loyalty to his politics is stronger than his passion for her, she finally leaves him. Love is lost, but the search goes on. "I want him to know that I alone will build my own future."

The last statement reveals the essence of the problem that the modern Arab woman faces. "I alone will build my own future," independently of him, the man she has traditionally been tied to and identified with—be he father, brother, husband, benefactor, or protector. These fetters on a woman's freedom have been considerably weakened since Egypt's Qasim Amin addressed himself to the problem of the emancipation of women in his controversial book *Tahrir al Mar'a* (*The Liberation of Women*), published in 1889. The Gordian knot of this issue, however, is an indefinable

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

psychological trait in the Arab male's temperament. The Arab male rejects a complete break from tradition and insists, if not on total possession, at least on a degree of submission from a woman. This is important to him since it involves his pride, honor, and manhood.

In France, where *I Live* appeared in translation, Layla Ba'albaki was acclaimed as the Arab Françoise Sagan. Although her lyrical style and decidedly youthful feminine social preoccupation put her work in the company of Sagan's *Bonjour Tristesse,* there remains a world of difference between the two. They are as different as French and Arabic social mores and especially as those mores affect the woman's place in society. Lena never finds the courage or the means to overcome her adolescent innocence. In an interview, Ba'albaki has succinctly expressed the difference between her world and that of Sagan: "The problem of a girl in Sagan's novels is how to live with a man in her own apartment, while the problem of an Eastern girl is how to go shopping alone." In her second novel, *Al Aliha al Mamsukha* (*The Disfigured Gods*), Ba'albaki resorts to the technique of a series of letters, a technique the French author Michele Perrein had employed in *La Sensitive.* Mira, the heroine of *The Disfigured Gods,* is, like Lena, searching for a more meaningful relationship between the sexes. But Mira, not unlike Perrein's heroine, is caught between two men: a middle-aged man who seeks her company as compensation for his unhappy marriage and a young man who, losing his existential bearings, finds in Mira's body the only sensual evidence of belongingness.

The correspondence between Mira and her lover's wife—who happens also to be her close friend—dwells on the subjects of love, manners, customs, the relations between men and women, and death. In *The Disfigured Gods* death is symbolized by a purple cloud that hangs over Mira's mind after she witnesses a man being hit by a car and watches a blot of purple blood form on the road by his side. The problem of death dominates the novel; Ba'albaki's other considerations gain definition only through their juxtaposition to her discussion of death.

The Disfigured Gods has not achieved the popularity of *I Live,* although in the former Ba'albaki shows greater maturity and deeper insight into the existentialist dilemmas of both men and women. In *I Live* she simply indulged in a declamatory self-pity which, in a society of traditionally silent feminine submission, sounded like a resounding protest. Lena's milieu is stagnant, weighted down by half-dead traditions. Only in her own agitated

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

soul is there life. Only her experience matters. Lena suffers from the weakness that afflicts many protagonists in Arabic novels—the inability to face adversity. The community is dead and with it the hero. Nothing is left for Ba'albaki's protagonist to do but meditate about the idea of death; this is exactly what she does in *The Disfigured Gods.*

VI. *In Search of a Theme*

The heroine of the female novel of social protest is a vanishing heroine. She was utilized to plead for a cause that has already had its actors and encounters. What remains is the tedious effort necessary to widen and deepen the scope of female freedom. Time and technology will, one hopes, take care of this.

But if the protesting heroine is vanishing, the searching hero is here to stay. Camus' Mersault and Sartre's Reguentin have won a fairly large Arab following. *Al Mahzumun* (*The Routed*), by Hani al Rahib of Syria, is a good example of attempts to create characters who fit certain existentialist ideas developed in European literature. As the author himself had been, Bishr, the hero of *The Routed,* is a student at Damascus University. He tries to extricate himself from an existence burdened by incompatible inherited values, social and moral chaos, estrangement, boredom, and absurdity. He solves his problem by marshaling sufficient freedom to decide of his own volition to become "committed" to the revolutionary struggle of the society he originally rejected.

Bishr is obviously committed to a struggle that promises change rather than a particular idea or program. In this he is not atypical of his generation which has been uprooted and is, therefore, searching for a new belongingness. Deprived of the security of the stable values of an earlier age, of the comfort of an identifiable code of absolute moral standards, this generation is searching for new values and morals. The value systems of their fathers and grandfathers are no longer relevant. For the writer in Arab countries today, as in an earlier epoch in the United States, this moral dislocation has resulted in what John W. Aldridge has called the "novel of the single consciousness." The writer, having lost direct communication with his environment, seeks "to impress his own assumptions upon his audience." The mood in contemporary Arabic fiction, not unlike that in Arabic politics, is one of the searching restlessness typical during a renascence.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

N. V. M. GONZALEZ

The Filipino and the Novel

To THE Filipino the world of the imagination has a singular appeal, for the work-a-day world is particularly depressing. The per-capita national income last year was slightly less than a hundred dollars. A recent survey revealed that only 4.7 per cent of over five million households enjoy an income of $1,250 a year and nearly 80 per cent must make do on $500 a year.[1] The Filipino imagination must confront or gloss over life lived at this level; it is here that the novelist finds the "vast but finite quarry"[2] which, with luck, becomes his fulfillment.

In areas where the twentieth century has become a reality, radio, television, and the movies have cashed in on an audience that seeks escape from the harsh conditions of life in the Philippines. Tagalog, which recently became officially known as Pilipino, is spoken by 44 per cent of the population, and English by 39.5 per cent; the literacy rate is 72 per cent.[3] Upon this wide base, fortunes have been built by entrepreneurs, even in the field of publishing. But this has not worked to the best interest of the novel as an art form. As Ortega y Gasset has said, "There exist a definite number of possible themes for the novel. The workmen of the primal hour had no trouble finding new blocks—new characters, new themes. But present-day workers face the fact that only narrow and concealed veins are left them."[4] In the Filipino novelist's milieu, the large and obvious veins have not, as yet, been worked out. His themes are writ large in the daily press, which enjoys an unusually vigorous and jealously guarded freedom and exhibits an amplitude of moral indignation with which fiction cannot seem to compete. It is perhaps for this reason that few serious novels are being written in the Philippines today.

The insistence upon a new Rizal, a new *Noli me tangere,* is un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

derstandable in the light of corruption in high places, ideological evasions, assorted venalities, and the like. A man of abundant gifts, Jose Rizal (1861/1896) was only twenty-six when he wrote *Noli me tangere,* a book which, with its companion volume, *El filibusterismo,* written four years later, unleashed upon the author the full wrath of the Establishment. Rizal died a martyr's death and today occupies a revered niche in the Philippine pantheon. His two books are required reading for college students, and their popularization has assumed the proportions of a minor industry. In regard to their status as novels, however, qualifications have been expressed. Of *Noli,* particularly, the following is typical: "The book is a novel only in the sense that the technique employed by the author is that of fiction. It is a mistake to suppose that because it is written in novel form it is, therefore, fiction."[5]

The much-sought relevance of history to fiction has become a special feature of the milieu in which the Filipino novelist works. It is expressed in the call for the Great Filipino Novel, a depiction, possibly, of private lives that would encompass Philippine experience within living memory. Rizal's aim, while immediate and practical in terms of the conditions about which he wrote, set the canon for the form. Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) and Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1861) might have shown Rizal and his contemporaries what the novelist's idea of order could create; but this was not in their sights. Rizal's target emerged from a personal conviction that reforms were due in the country. His fiction was meant to veil his purpose, though thinly. The novel must lead to an epiphany of self-knowledge and the will to reform. Writing to a friend, Rizal attested to his confidence in history: "The facts I narrate are all true and actually happened; I can prove them."[6] His milieu today could well ask the Filipino novelist for similar assurances and could count indeed on getting them.

A problem that immediately presented itself to the serious writers after Rizal was not quite that of the novel itself; rather, it was the question of language. Charles E. Derbyshire's English translation of Rizal's *Noli me tangere* suggested the possibilities for fiction in English—the language instituted as the medium of instruction in the growing school system under the American regime; but the pleasures of reading about the Philippine scene in this new text did not assuage the nationalist's yearnings. He was aware that Tagalog, while not widely spoken in the country at that time, could best express the sentiments of the Filipino writer.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The first decade of the American regime witnessed a new fervor for writing in Tagalog. Sold at Manila church patios, side by side with votive candles and *novenas,* were metrical romances, popular love stories, and *Florante at Laura,* the masterpiece of an early heyday, by Francisco Baltazar (1788/1862), better known as Balagtas. The theater was active and not adverse to presenting anti-American plays, even at the risk of being closed down. Some eighteen years had passed since the writing of *Noli,* and Tagalog intellectuals in Manila were following a newspaper serial entitled *Banaag at Sikat* (Glow and Sunrise). A long discursive narrative, it offered readers progressive ideas barely disguised by a contrivance of romantic events.

Its author, Lope K. Santos (1879/1963), was not a newcomer to the field of romantic fiction in Tagalog. As a printer's son, he had worked on galley proofs and written several love stories for the trade. To Mariano C. Javier, he was to describe years later how he turned schoolteacher and newspaperman. Javier set down the story as a preface to a critical reading and a complete English translation of *Banaag at Sikat,* the first attempted in fifty years.[7] To his first-hand experience in the labor movement, Lope K. Santos added the knowledge he had gained from reading some four hundred books by such authors as Vicente Blazco Ibañez, Ruben Dario, Karl Marx, Victor Hugo, and Leo Tolstoi. Although Javier may be correct in saying that *Banaag at Sikat* is essentially a long definition of socialism, this novel remains the most ambitious single effort of its day in Tagalog prose. The work did not find readers too readily, and Santos' printers relentlessly hounded the author.[8]

The book did win a measure of recognition for its author, for it appeared when labor unions were beginning to be organized in secret and when it was nearly seditious to speak about mounting a strike. Quick to see the qualities of the author, Manuel L. Quezon, then the acknowledged Filipino leader in the government, projected Lope K. Santos into public life. He became a provincial governor and was later appointed senator by the American Governor General, Francis Burton Harrison. Quezon some years later was to launch a strong program for Tagalog as the national language, and Lope K. Santos crowned his literary career by presenting his friend with a comprehensive grammar of the language.

Lope K. Santos and his *Banaag at Sikat* illustrate the tension between talent and milieu. It was not quite the book that the author's friend and critic, Macario Adriatico, would have liked to see.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In introducing the book to its public, Adriatico could not help suggesting: "Indeed the author might do well to model his work after those by the great masters—Zola, for instance; he must observe and study life well before attempting a portrayal of it."[9] The remark did not discourage the author: Time would prove him right, as he was to emphasize later in his "Afterword." His interest had not been on character but on ideas. Adriatico's comment indicated that the milieu asked of its writers, on the one hand, those impossible romantic narratives intended for sheer entertainment, several of which Lope K. Santos provided himself, and, on the other hand, serious fiction in the cast and direction of *Noli*, a costuming of actuality in order to project a measure of social reform.

A definition of the novelist's role was evolving. Jorge C. Bocobo, in 1925, gave the following description of the proper subject for the Filipino novel:

> There is a bounteous store of material that awaits the magic touch of the dreamer of dreams and the teller of tales. Our rugged, simple home virtues, than which there is no richer heritage from our forebears, could breathe the genial spirit of beauty into any song or story. Nature in her tropic moods—her radiant lavishness, her throbbing radiance, her infinite calm, her wrathful upheavals, and terrible agitations: these generously lend themselves to poetic fantasy. The iron fortitude of our heroes, who with their blood have "tinged the dawn" of freedom, the unfaltering struggles of our people for their God-given right to live their own life—these must claim the inspired pen of him who has the gift to utter them in lofty accents and vibrant strain.[10]

The rhetoric was typical of the period. In any case, more English was being spoken and written in the country than ever before. The intellectuals as a class had acquired an enthusiasm for the language; the essay had become a favorite form, and samples of the "vibrant strain" were turning up in verse by undergraduates at the University of the Philippines. As early as 1912, it was apparent that there was a need for criticism that would indicate whether "the Filipino public is susceptible to the imaginings of a native Tennyson . . . whether the ideals and aspirations of the race could be expressed in English and yet remain distinctively native."[11] Bocobo, however, was hardly that critic; his interests were elsewhere.

"The great Filipino novel," he wrote, "or the great Filipino drama, or the great Filipino poem, will not be in English; it will be in one of the Filipino languages." To underline his view, he cited Dante, Cervantes, and Chaucer, whose masterpieces were written at a time when "Latin was the language of high culture in Eu-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rope."[12] This issue has remained unresolved even though the Filipino creative imagination has preoccupied itself with the fictional forms, particularly the sketch and the short story.

In 1928, the twenty-five best short stories from an annual crop of six hundred were gathered into a small volume under the imprint of the English-language weekly *Philippines Free Press*. "The aim, apart from self-interest," the sponsors wrote, "was to develop a school of Filipino writers or authors, partly as filling a want in the local literary field and partly with a view to the possible development of some literary genius who might make a name for himself in the United States."[13] This last note, because it posed the status of best seller as a factor of success, has probably caused great harm to the Filipino imagination. In any case, by 1933, Jose Garcia Villa, the editor of the *Free Press* anthology, had collected his short stories under the title *Footnote to Youth*—a collection that drew from Edward J. O'Brien a more than approving smile. O'Brien marked Villa as "among the half-dozen short story writers in America who count"; he further observed that Villa's individual viewpoint in "the interpretation of American life, as well as the energy which these stories reveal, suggest that he might well give us a new reading of the American scene in novels of contemporary life."[14] This expectation —insofar as it concerned the writing of novels in general and not necessarily novels about the American scene—was shared by the younger generation of writers; Villa might indeed come up with *the* Filipino novel in English.

He devoted his main attention from then on, however, to poetry. But he also heightened the consciousness of form and substance in the Philippine short story by evaluating the annual crop in the manner of Edward J. O'Brien, who himself followed the literary work in America and Britain. The direction was indeed timely. With the institution of the Commonwealth Literary Awards in 1940, the milieu was ready to accept the reality of a new literature—a literature written in English.

The justification for appropriating tax-money for literature derived from a provision in the Philippine Constitution which committed the state to a role as patron of the arts and letters. It required, however, some promotion on the part of the newly organized Philippine Writers' League. The League encouraged social consciousness in the growing literature in reaction to the creeping dilettantism in poetry, the essay, and the short story. The League's leadership came, ironically, from the University of the Philippines

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Writers' Club, that is to say, from the same group of young writers who, in 1927, had introduced themselves "to the general public as the faithful followers of Shakespeare," and who in twelve years were to disown their motto ("Art shall not be a means to an end; but an end in itself") in favor of something more pertinent, more immediate. The League's best spokesman, Salvador P. Lopez, wrote: "The writer, therefore, who works upon the belief that man is a mere fancier of beautiful words and golden phrases, has missed the essential element in man. He works in a vacuum and, therefore, works in vain. . . ."[15] This sense of urgency was heightened by the fact that Nazism had, by then, overrun Europe; in a few more years Japanese imperialists were to mount their invasion of the Philippines. "Go through the history of literature, and you will find that the greatest writers are ever those whose feet were planted on the earth regardless of how high up in the clouds their heads might have been," Lopez wrote in 1940.[16] This reminder is reflected in the novels in English that even then were being written.

Juan C. Laya's *His Native Soil* received the Commonwealth Award for the Novel in 1940. Using a Filipino who had returned from America as its central character, *His Native Soil* considers the problem of social change. In a second novel, *This Barangay* (1950), Laya examines a similar theme, the return to traditional community living.

A concept of character, flat and in the round, was becoming a feature of fictional writing; this was developed further in the novels that followed. It is particularly evident in Stevan Javellana's *Without Seeing the Dawn* (1947), Edilberto K. Tiempo's *Watch in the Night* (1953), Nick Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (1961), and, more recently, Bienvenido N. Santos's *Villa Magdalena* (1966) and *The Volcano* (1966). A reading of these works discloses a tremendous creative vitality trying to come to grips with actuality. The question Manuel E. Arguilla put to Hemingway in 1940, How much of fact should there be in one's writing? was indeed pertinent to Filipino fictional development.

Arguilla, author of the short-story collection *How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife* (1940), had raised the point at a private party where the American novelist, in Manila on a brief visit, was a guest. The record of this incident is largely in paraphrase, but it is nevertheless credible.[17] Hemingway reportedly replied that "one had to know the subject thoroughly and from there invent, because if [one] wrote cold facts, they would not be at all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interesting, as nothing ever happens to us anyway." This advice hardly comforted the Filipino writer who was well aware that he was in the vortex of public events. In due course he was to cope with Bataan, the Japanese Occupation, Independence in 1946—material, in short, that would be sufficient to atrophy the imagination.

Neither was William Faulkner, in 1955, of much help when he told his audience: "Just to report facts, to report injustice, sometimes is not enough. That doesn't move people. The writer's got to add the gift of his talent; he has to take the truth and set it on fire so that people will remember it."[18] Actuality, not unlike the cosmos of Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, has seemed to be always on fire. Worse, the novelist, if he could tend his fire at all, could not count on a large audience.

The reason is not hard to find, in fact, for the Filipino writer lives in a country where there is no "middle class." What passes for it is the educated sector of the national community which has middle-class aspirations, but not the corresponding economic freedom to attain them. The novel as a saturation of "individualism and liberal culture," as V. S. Pritchett puts it,[19] cannot but become for the Filipino primarily a tract for the evolution of that middle class. Faulkner suggested to his Philippine audience in 1955 that the best way to get a "certain portrait in the legends, the customs of the people that are valuable" is to work these into the body of a national literature and, later, into that of universal literature.[20] Reviewing a collection of Philippine short stories, Donald Keene wrote, by way of a progress report on Philippine literature: "It [the collection] is an admirable testimony to the emergence of another important branch of English literature."[21] But this was not the kind of success that really mattered. In view of the Filipino's aspirations to middle-class status in terms of individualism and liberalism (which are central to the portrait that Faulkner mentioned), the Filipino novel seems to have been evolving as a tool to clear the ground for social action rather than as an art form trying to find its proper setting.

Still, the Filipino shares with writers the world over "a glut of new means, new manners, and new styles" which V. S. Pritchett identifies as the heart of the troubles of the modern novelist.[22] According to Pritchett the novelist's views on his art and on the practices of his antecedents and contemporaries are indeed "hardly more than steam rising from a simmering pot. Or, more precisely,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clues to his own conflicts." One of these conflicts concerns his moving away from or remaining in the direction set by *Noli.* Writers, so far, have concentrated on the Filipino, unique in his time and place. The intended subject is Man, as he has always been and however Filipino he might be.

A contemporary example is Nick Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels,* a work which Professor Leonard Casper has described as embodying a style and theme "perfectly adapted to one another's needs, in this novel proving Joaquin is Faulkner/Dostoevsky."[23] In it Casper discovers the dimensions of a moral memory to be "not just the coexistence of the divinely oriented Spanish past and the pragmatic American-influenced present but the intersection of time and eternity as well"; in those "navels" are the dualities "of the diabolic and the angelic in man."[24] For all this, however, national self-consciousness has blurred much of the reading of Joaquin and of those of his colleagues who have attained a similar level of performance. This audience has preferred to read Joaquin as an illumination upon a past and upon an uneasy present, combining a sweet nostalgia with an understandable anxiety.

There have been interesting refinements in the short story, which, since the twenties, has offered private enjoyment to the individual reader in the solitude of his critical awareness and fellow feeling. If nowhere else, it is from the ranks of short-story writers that the rich metaphorical resources of Philippine culture are finding their discoverers and users. These writers reflect a wide acceptance, perhaps largely unconscious, of "the very richness of our social experience, the diversity of our cultural traditions," and this has raised a serious "problem of synthesis."[25]

But it is quite possible, even today, to offer such a synthesis in terms of the short story in English while keeping alive the hope that a critical investigation of the short story in Tagalog, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, and Iloko, to mention the principal language areas where the form has been very much in use since the thirties, can present a similar achievement. There is still another way of looking at the matter of synthesis: by examining a selection from works by such writers as Sinai C. Hamada, Manuel E. Arguilla, Bienvenido N. Santos, Francisco Arcellana, Gilda Cordero Fernando, and Gregorio C. Brillantes. This listing covers thirty years of the short story in the Philippines, but it can, to a perceptive reader, appear to include material by only one hand. These works express a sensibility which, during the Commonwealth period, World War II, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thereafter, has developed a maturity of style, technique, and themes.

The conflict between country and city, youth as the "fair hope of the Fatherland," the idea of the Lost Eden, and the intricate interaction of illusion and reality, of form and substance, of intention and outcome have successfully engaged the imagination of four generations of Filipino short-story writers. Only now is their success being noticed, thanks to critics like Leonard Casper and Donald Keene, and to a very few magazine editors in America. The truly new in Casper's critical anthology, *New Writing from the Philippines* (Syracuse University Press, 1966), is the composite image that the reader inevitably must form of an emerging literature that is essentially a response of Philippine society and of the creative imagination to the circumstances of history and cultural exchange.

The brevity of the short story, its modest appeal for attention, the relative ease of publication, and the wide variety of truly small subjects possible of illumination are ready assets that the Filipino writer has used to advantage. He has been further aided in his progress by the criticism on the short story that began to gather after World War II. The attention that the Filipino writer gave to Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks, to Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon, and to Robert W. Stallman, V. S. Pritchett, and Mark Schorer was an investment in the fifties that today is handsomely paying off. Among the writers in the native languages, those in Cebuano have been especially responsive to the insights derived from these critics, while those writing in Tagalog, hampered by the demands of an extremely large but peculiarly undiscriminating audience, have been less so.

In contrast to the Filipino short story, with its diversity of voices and sophistication in performance, the Filipino novel has tended somewhat toward simplification, perhaps because of the novelist's inability to cope with the Rizal tradition. Its scope and its obvious social relevance have made an intensity of illusion, to use a Jamesian distinction, difficult to attain. That such intensity must come from a fine mind, as James prescribes, still needs unequivocal demonstration. It may well be that for some time the short story will provide a testing ground; but one cannot overlook the fact that the novelist's imagination is, in its reach and intentions, quite different from that of the short-story writer's. To arrive at this insight through trial and error is too time consuming; yet for most writers this will have to be a necessary phase. It is from those who have come to terms with the demands of these two forms of fiction that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

impressive performances will come. Their emergence on the literary scene, incidentally, may well coincide with the hurried efforts to introduce industrialization and to raise the per-capita national income. The increased tempo of economic development may minimize the appeal of the short story and generate more ardor for the novel, as has happened in England, for example. In all likelihood, however, it will take many years before this stage of growth can be reached.

It must be pointed out that the *ex abundantia* which Ortega y Gasset speaks of as a feature of the density from which a novel comes into being[26] is perhaps another aspect of self-consciousness. This density presents a real challenge. It requires strategies that must defeat, for instance, the current convention in Tagalog publishing which, as a simple matter of editorial policy, discourages the rendered scene. It must, at the same time, rise above the picturesque and charming, which, especially in the case of the Filipino novel seeking an attentive and respectful audience abroad, are allegedly endearing qualities that are proudly announced on the dust jacket.

Indeed, such strategies will be discovered as the Filipino novelist perseveres; to certain of today's critics their occasional presence should be no surprise. The Filipino novelist's role, in any case, will not be unlike that suggested in a Tagalog riddle about a rich man's house which is full of treasures and which a burglar explores, keeping for himself whatever object strikes his fancy, and yet—so the riddle insists—leaving every work of value, every gem and heirloom, in its original place.

The riddle describes how a thoughtful reader might, like this burglar, go through the Filipino novel with profit. It offers the Filipino novelist a purpose and defines his scope and method.

References

1. *Manila Chronicle,* June 5, 1966, Business Sec., p. 7.
2. Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art* (New York, 1956), p. 54.
3. *Manila Chronicle, op. cit.*
4. Ortega y Gasset, *op. cit.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

5. Teodoro A. Agoncillo and Oscar M. Alfonso, *A Short History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City, 1960), p. 169.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Mariano C. Javier, *A Study of the Life and Works of Lope K. Santos, with Special Reference to* Banaag at Sikat (unpublished Master's Thesis; University of the Philippines, 1960).
8. Lope K. Santos, *"Huling-Kabit"* ("Afterword"), *Banaag at Sikat* (2d ed.; Manila, 1959), pp. d-e.
9. Macario Adriatico, *"Paunawa"* ("Foreword"), Santos, *op. cit.*, p. vii.
10. Jorge C. Bocobo, "Cultural Independence of the Philippines," *Philippines Herald,* Dec. 2, 1924, ed. Leopoldo Y. Yabes, *Filipino Essays in English* (Quezon City, 1954), p. 34.
11. Fernando M. Maramag, "A Call for Critics," *The College Folio,* Oct. 1912, Yabes, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
12. Jorge C. Bocobo, *loc. cit.*
13. "Publisher's Note," ed. Jose Garcia Villa, *Philippine Short Stories/Best 25 of 1928* (Manila, n. d.), p. 3.
14. Edward J. O'Brien, "Introduction," Jose Garcia Villa, *Footnote to Youth* (New York, 1933), p. 5.
15. Salvador P. Lopez, *Literature and Society* (Manila, 1940), p. 105.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
17. Elmer A. Ordoñez, "Literature of the Commonwealth," *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review,* Vol. 28, No. 4 (Dec. 1963), p. 400.
18. William Faulkner, *On Truth and Freedom* (Manila, n.d.), p. 3.
19. V. S. Pritchett, "The Future of Fiction," ed. John Lehmann, *Penquin New Writing* 32 (London, 1947), p. 104.
20. Faulkner, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
21. Donald Keene, "Native Voice in Foreign Tongue," *Saturday Review of Literature* (Oct. 6, 1962), p. 44.
22. Pritchett, *op. cit.*, p. 106.
23. Leonard Casper, *The Wounded Diamond* (Manila, 1964), p. 134.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.
25. Horacio de la Costa, S. J., "The Responsibility of the Writer in Contemporary Philippine Society," *Literature and Society* (Manila, 1964), p. 111.
26. Ortega y Gasset, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROBERT ALTER

The Israeli Novel

In order to make any sense of what is happening to the novel in Israel, one must take full account of the stubborn and peculiar fact that Israeli novels are written in Hebrew. Because of the unique history of the language and the unique process of revival which it is still undergoing, this has rather more complicated implications than, say, the fact that American novels are written in English. The anomalies of the Hebrew writer's linguistic situation play an important role in determining his relationship with other generations of writers in his own literature, the lines of influence from the outside that are open or largely closed to him, and even, to some extent, the particular modes of fiction he will adopt. To understand why this should be so, a few essential facts about Hebrew literary history will be necessary.

The East-European intellectuals who formed the nucleus of modern Jewish immigration to Palestine more than half a century ago did not arrive in the new pioneering community and then as a result begin to write fiction in Hebrew. Almost the opposite is true. It is partly as a result of Hebrew literary activity in nineteenth-century Russia and Poland that the fantastic idea was conceived of re-establishing a Hebrew-speaking culture on the soil of Palestine. Short Hebrew fiction of a crude sort was being written in Galicia by the 1820's, and the first identifiable Hebrew novel was published in 1853, decades before people dreamed that anywhere in the world toddlers would be prattling, cabbies cursing, professors lecturing, in Hebrew. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Hebrew literary centers in Odessa, Vilna, Warsaw, and elsewhere had produced a surprising variety of writers of fiction—most of them intent, imitative, and imaginatively limited, but among them one novelist of real stature, a number of sensitive short-story writers,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and even a serious experimenter in a kind of stream-of-consciousness fiction. All of this creative work took place, it must be remembered, in a milieu where the common spoken language was Yiddish, not Hebrew.

The whole development, then, of the Hebrew novel, from its beginnings until the 1940's, went against the linguistic grain that has been one of the generic distinctions of the novel. For the general movement of the novel, as we are often reminded, has been to narrow the gap between literary language and the language of everyday experience; this is why the genre typically begins with, and frequently recurs to, fictional memoirs, letters, journals, "true histories"—fictions presented in the vocabulary and form of documentary fact. The earlier Hebrew novelists, however, were forced to work in exactly the opposite direction. By writing in Hebrew about people whose language was in fact Yiddish, or, occasionally, Russian, Polish, or German, they had to produce what was manifestly no more than an "as-if reality," in the phrase of the Israeli critic, Dov Sadan. Where the European novel often tended to camouflage its own status as invented literature, the Hebrew novel had little choice but to flaunt its literary nature, to find ways of converting its obtrusive literariness into an artistic resource. It is understandable, therefore, that the first Hebrew novel, Abraham Mapu's *Love of Zion*, is historical—an involuted and improbable romance set in Jerusalem in the time of Isaiah, written in a style that is a sort of impassioned pastiche of Biblical phrases. Mapu's language was hardly a suitable instrument for rendering contemporary realities with minute particularity, and when the Hebrew novel came of age toward the end of the century in the work of Mendele Mocher Seforim ("Mendele the Bookseller," pen name for S. J. Abramowitz), it was through a recapitulation of the whole range of Hebrew literary history, a bold synthesis of the language of the Bible, the Talmud, rabbinic legend, of the medieval exegetes and philosophers, of the prayer book and later liturgical poetry, of moral tracts and legal codes, even of communal records. Using all these materials, Mendele was able to recreate with remarkable sensuous particularity the world of Russian Jewry in which he lived, peopling his books with Dickensian caricatures vividly and lovingly rendered down to the last bristling wart on the nose and the last grease spot on the hem of the caftan. But Mendele was always highly conscious that the components of his style were traditional and literary, and his practice and achievement fully estab-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lished the peculiar central tradition of the Hebrew novel in which the principal rhetorical device is literary allusion.

The novel in general has, quite obviously, taken as its subject the new problematic look assumed by the human condition in a secularized world where traditional ideals, religious or otherwise, no longer obtain. What sets the Hebrew novel apart is that its language, until fairly recently, has been to a large extent the language of piety, suffused with the associations of a religious tradition, so that, typically, a continual tension—usually a pointedly ironic tension—is set up between the reminiscence of lofty spiritual ideals in the language and the fallen nature of the world which the language describes. Today, this allusive mode of fiction is rapidly disappearing from the novel in Israel as an increasing proportion of the writers are native Israelis who have acquired their Hebrew naturally as a spoken language; the transition is itself one of the problematic aspects of the Israeli literary scene. Writers now in their forties or younger make only occasional and fragmentary use of the old allusive mode, while it continues to be a standard practice of the elder novelists who are still active, and who, for the most part, are European-born and thus have learned their Hebrew first from sacred texts. The result is that by and large there is no common artistic language shared by literary generations in Israel, and, as the younger writers have come to dominate the scene during the last two decades, they have found themselves in the unenviable position of initiating, tentatively and unsurely, their own "tradition" of the Hebrew novel, every five years or so.[1] This disparity is heightened by the fact that the older generation includes one figure who is indisputably a great novelist—the seventy-eight-year-old Shmuel Yosef Agnon—while the younger group has so far produced no more than some very interesting possibilities and uneven achievements.

Agnon, who was raised in a pious and scholarly household in a small town in Galicia, has a masterly knowledge of the varied literature of Jewish tradition, legal and legendary, moral and mystic; and his highly stylized language, with its predominantly medieval coloration, represents the consummate achievement of the allusive mode in Hebrew fiction. For this very reason, his books tantalize, exasperate, and finally defy translation; if the words can be more or less translated, their complex allusiveness must be almost entirely abandoned and with it much of the pointedness and poignancy of his artful, painstakingly polished prose. Let me try to show

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

how this distinctively Hebrew rhetorical strategy works by offering an extended passage together with some detailed comment on its allusive play of language. I shall quote the opening paragraph of Agnon's long novel, *Just Yesterday* (1946), set in Palestine around 1906, when Agnon himself first immigrated; the translation is, alas, my own because, as with most of Agnon's major work, no English version is yet available:

> Like the rest of our brothers, the men of our redemption, immigrants of the Second Wave, Yitzhak Kummer left his country, his birthplace, and his city and went up to the Land of Israel to build it from its destruction and to be rebuilt by it. As far back as he could think, our friend Yitzhak had not let a day pass in which he failed to meditate upon the Land. Like a dwelling place of blessing the whole Land seemed to him and all its inhabitants like the blessed of the Lord. Its settlements were hidden in the shadow of vineyards and olive trees, all the fields were decked with produce, the trees crowned with fruit, the valleys covered with flowers, while forest trees swayed and the sky was all pure blue and every house was filled with song. During the days, people plowed and sowed and planted and reaped, plucked the grapes and picked the olives, threshed the wheat and tread the winepress. At eventide, each and every one would sit under his vine and under his fig tree, his wife and sons and daughters around him, all happy over their work, rejoicing in their repose, recalling the days past in the Diaspora, as one will remember in the hour of joy his days of sorrow and so take a double pleasure in the present bounty. An imaginative fellow was Yitzhak—out of the place his heart desired he would conjure up imagined things.

The placid progress here of Agnon's prose through the luminous details of a Zionist idyll to the final modest demurral is perhaps meant temporarily to disguise, but certainly not to dilute, the acid irony that saturates the whole passage. Some notion of the subsequent course of the novel will make the particular bite of this irony more palpable. The protagonist's name is Kummer—which, as the verbal noun in Yiddish for "one who comes" and as the German word for "grief," suggests both major aspects of his emblematic role. Kummer's first name is Yitzhak, or Isaac, and like the Biblical Isaac, he will be bound for sacrifice on "one of the mountains"—tradition identifies the vague phrase in Genesis with the temple mount, and he actually dies in Jerusalem—in a twentieth-century Land of Israel where there is no heavenly voice to cry out at the critical moment and revoke the senseless immolation. (It is worth noting that other Hebrew novelists have since used this same motif of the outrageous Binding of Isaac in a way that is precisely analogous to the mythic motif of the secular Christ, the meaningless

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crucifixion, which so many modern writers in other literatures have employed.) The fact that this Isaac is "one who comes" only emphasizes his permanent location as an outsider, a man who comes from the outside and remains there. Though he "goes up" to the Land, in the traditional Hebrew idiom, to redeem himself and his people, his coming is actually much like that of Kafka's K. in *The Castle*—nobody expects him, there is no clear place for him or justification for his presence. Like K., the land surveyor, Yitzhak tries to demonstrate that he has a calling which connects him with the land; but his attempt to become an agricultural worker is a pathetic failure, and he ends up, ironically, as a house painter, covering natural surfaces with artificial substance, hiding realities with façades. The Land itself, far from corresponding to Yitzhak's idyllic vision, is a place of spiritual confusion, cynicism, moral cowardice, hypocrisy, fanaticism. The protagonist discovers, moreover, that there is not even one Land of Israel but two: the new city of Jaffa, with its rootless intellectuals, and the old city of Jerusalem, with its religious obscurantists. Yitzhak is tossed between the two like a shuttlecock, and, though he dies in one, the novel suggests that both offer but different faces of the same inevitable destruction for the man who has come.

By now, the general force of the irony in the opening passage of the novel should be clear. But almost every phrase in the paragraph is a telling one by virtue of some pointed ironic reference, and in noting the allusions, which range from Genesis to Zionist catchwords, we can see how precisely Agnon characterizes Yitzhak's mental world and the quixotic nature of his ideals. Most of the reminiscences of Biblical verses in the passage should be recognizable even in the English version, and they need only be mentioned briefly. Yitzhak Kummer leaves "his country, his birthplace," like Abraham, but he will find no providential God in the promised land with whom to seal an eternal covenant. He imagines the barren, strife-ridden Palestine in language recalling the visions of pastoral harmony in the Psalms and in the Prophets—"Like a dwelling-place of blessing . . ."—and he mentally invokes the verbal formula of the Book of Kings for perfect peace and prosperity—"each man under his vine and under his fig tree." A less obvious Biblical reference is the initial phrase, which echoes "your brothers, the men of your redemption" of Ezekiel 11:15, part of a prophecy of the return to Zion.

More of the allusions, however, are post-Biblical. The pioneer

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

families sit together "happy over their work, rejoicing . . ."—a parallelism that recalls a Mishnaic phrase from the Passover home-service used in a climactic prayer for the restoration of Zion. Yitzhak Kummer comes to the Land "to build it from its destruction," a recurrent idiom of messianic aspiration in rabbinic legend. Moreover, this man who is to be utterly shattered longs "to build . . . and to be rebuilt," in the words of a popular Zionist song, once danced enthusiastically to the step-hop of the hora. Even the list of verbs specifying agricultural activities is rich with associations for Yitzhak; he would know these words from having studied the agricultural tractates of the Mishnah, which preserve a vocabulary intimately connected with farming in ancient Palestine, a vocabulary that reflects the Hebrew farmer's closeness to the soil in its specialized verbs (of course, untranslatable) for the harvesting of grapes, olives, grain.

What is most difficult to describe is the subtle kind of irony generated in the passage by what might be called the allusiveness of tone. Through the amalgam of styles in the Hebrew, one gets the sense of a pious narrator—or rather, "as-if" pious—assuming the modes of address and the idioms of a traditional tale of wonders wrought for God's glory. The terms, for example, connected with "imagination" at the end of the paragraph are taken from the vocabulary of the medieval moralists. The use at the beginning of "our brothers, the men of our redemption," though it is Biblical, as we have seen, also suggests something of the assumption of devout solidarity one finds in the language of the Hasidic tales. "Our brothers" is a standard usage in this folk literature, and "men of our redemption" recalls in form the common Hasidic idiom, "men of our peace," so that the whole phrase becomes a kind of "translation" into the language of piety of Zionist ideals. Since the novel will show the terrifying emptiness of the new "redemption," the awful lack of true solidarity, and much more, the ultimate effect of Agnon's assuming this mask—it is his usual one—of traditional narrator writing for a God-fearing world is not only ironic but also a little eerie. Through the ironic contrast, Agnon forces us continually to feel the full nakedness of living in an inimical world shorn of the innocence and wholeness of piety.

This consideration of the beginning of *Just Yesterday* should indicate that Agnon's central achievement is not one that lends itself to definition primarily in terms of influences from European literature. Agnon does know German literature well (he lived in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Germany from 1913 to 1926), and it would be surprising if he registered no response at all in his work to the exciting developments in German fiction of the earlier twentieth century. Many critics have noted affinities between Agnon and Kafka; Agnon has even written expressionist stories that are quite close to Kafka in form as well as theme. And, from the outset of his career, he has been so intrigued with the possibilities of building fiction around symbolic leitmotiv that he must have at least followed with great interest the experiments in symbol and motif of Thomas Mann.

Agnon's imagination, however, is too vigorously original, and his practice as a writer too deeply involved in the distinctive literature of Jewish tradition, to make any large aspect of his work unambiguously attributable to a European source. What one can say with certainty is that there are some significant affinities—as well as decisive differences—between Agnon and many of the European writers who in the first decades of this century created the literature we still think of as revolutionarily modern. Like Kafka, Mann, Proust, and so many writers of this period, Agnon experienced in his formative years the radical breakdown of an older social and cultural order that had seemed to him to be solid, protective, relatively harmonious. The fact that he grew up in a largely Jewish town around the turn of the century, at a period when the dissolution of the traditional values of old-world Judaism was advancing rapidly, had the effect of putting him at one of the symptomatic centers of historical change and cultural decay. Themes of tragic separation and collapse of values appear even in his earliest work, before World War I; but, like so many other writers, Agnon saw in the war the great symbolic embodiment of the modern reign of moral chaos, and so the war, destroyer of houses—an archetypal event for Agnon—of men, and of ways of life, became a recurrent presence in his work. He shares with Mann, Eliot, Joyce, and others a fascination with symbol and myth because for him, too, these afford a means of holding together imaginatively the pieces of a fragmented world and because he, too, participates in what Lionel Trilling has called the "spiritual" quality of modern literature—which is to say, he is always interested in relating individual experience to some ultimate order of significance, in setting man against the backdrop of eternity, and symbols help him to do this.

But if the symbolic and mythic aspects of Agnon's writing link him with the creators of the modern movement in European litera-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ture, they are also the hallmarks of his distinctiveness. His intimate acquaintance with the rich lore of Jewish tradition means that he draws many of his motifs, images, and archetypes from a body of "mythology" that is simply unknown to Western writers. His own symbolic inventiveness, moreover, is extraordinary, as is his interest in exploring a wide range of possibilities of symbolic fiction. Thus, while his work sometimes parallels the symbolic modes of other writers, it more often twists off in its own strange and fascinating directions. Agnon has written simple parables of consummate artistry and folk tales cunningly woven with strands of motif; nightmarish expressionist stories with recurrent symbols that break off, redouble themselves, flicker ambiguously; haunting lyric tales centered on sets of symbolic images whose meaning seems hermetic, perhaps finally private; elaborately structured poetic novels that transform social milieu into symbolic atmosphere and develop plot through variations on themes from traditional Hebrew legend.[2]

Over against the fiction of Agnon, with its symbolic impulse, its anti-realist experiments, its intricate stylistic implication in the Hebrew literary past, the native Israeli writers have generally committed themselves to a much more direct transcription of local reality. It is true that a few of the most interesting Israeli novels of the past half-dozen years have been parabolic or symbolic—at least two of them showing the clear influence of Agnon—but, for the most part, the work of the younger writers remains artistically conservative in its realism. There are, I think, good historical reasons for this adherence to realism, even to realism in some of its less imaginative, more colorless forms.

Linguistic considerations, to begin with, have made conventional realism a more challenging mode of fiction in Israel than it is likely to be anywhere else today. The writers who began to publish shortly before or after the founding of the State in 1948 were in part reacting to the avowed bookishness of the older writers' Hebrew. As the first adult generation of native speakers of Hebrew since ancient times, many of them felt a kind of responsibility to make the slangy, slurred Hebrew of the streets, the army, and the kibbutz function as a literary language. What is second nature to novelists in other countries was and to some extent still is problematic for Israeli writers because modern colloquial Hebrew is so new and so continually changing that it lacks much of the range and flexibility, and certainly much of the richness of associations, of a highly developed vernacular. Lengthy transcriptions of speech,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because they were linguistically faithful to actual models, seemed to be a virtue in themselves—perhaps this is why some Israeli novels are still too talky—and descriptive prose, aspiring to a tough modernity, was often no more than a literary adaptation of Hebrew journalese. At the same time, there were attempts to build a new kind of poetic Hebrew on the structural base of the new spoken language.

The culmination of all these tendencies of linguistic realism will remain, I suppose, S. Yizhar's immense stream-of-consciousness novel on the Israeli-Arab War, *The Days of Ziklag* (1958). Long sections of Yizhar's book are made up of dialogue, as the young Israeli soldiers who are the only characters anxiously question each other about the cause for which they are fighting, the disturbing meanings of their identity as Jews and citizens of the new state; the stylistic dividing-line between these spoken exchanges and the interior monologues is sometimes hazy. In between monologue and dialogue are exhaustively descriptive passages in which Yizhar renders the most minute movements of the battle, the smallest details of the Negev landscape with all its vegetation, even the changing constellations in the desert sky at night. Because Hebrew is structurally so different from the Western languages, there have been no really significant stylistic influences from without on Israeli writers—with the partial exception of Yizhar, who in both *The Days of Ziklag* and in his earlier fiction tries, by a constant kneading and reworking of the language, to make it expand to the capacity of lyric plenitude of the prose of Faulkner and Thomas Wolfe. The results of this procedure in his long novel are both dazzling and fatiguing. He makes his Hebrew embrace particulars of experience and nuances of perception which the language hitherto had been unable to reach; sometimes this descriptive activity has strict thematic appropriateness; sometimes it seems merely like an overly intent exercise in absorbing as much reality as is verbally possible. Surely one of the reasons that Yizhar has written virtually nothing since *The Days of Ziklag* is that in it he had carried the linguistic impulse of exhaustive realism as far as any writer or reader would want, so that to grow as a novelist he needed to strike out in a dramatically new direction, something which, for a variety of causes, he seems still unprepared to do.

The very conscious and immediate involvement in history that has characterized the Jewish settlement in Palestine and Israel has also encouraged native writers to feel a responsibility to "report"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the world around them. Yizhar's recurrence to the war, ten years after it, in the most ambitious of Israeli novels to date, suggests the general orientation of the novelists of the fifties toward recent collective experience. Every war, of course, brings after it a spate of war novels, but the young Israelis who fought against the Arabs in 1948–49 felt a special urgency to convey their experience not only because it was one that had shaken their private worlds but also because they were, after all, participants in the first armed struggle for Jewish independence since the second century A.D. This is not to suggest that the Israeli novel has been nationalistic or chauvinistic. On the contrary, many of the writers have acted as a kind of public conscience, questioning ideologies, raising the profoundest doubts about the moral and historical implications of public events. But some kind of commitment to public events generally persists, and that is a quality which tends to distinguish the Israeli novel from characteristic developments of the novel today in America, England, and France. The Zionist leadership, with an expectation of close connection between literature and politics that ultimately derives from East-European cultural traditions, would like the writers to "do" certain aspects of Israel—the great national project of gathering in and assimilating Exiles, the building of new industrial cities, the reclamation of desert land, and so forth. The fiction, however, that the younger writers actually produce is often a negative image of the glowing picture expected of them by the zealously patriotic, especially among their elders. Yet, ironically, the novelists generally have proceeded to "do" the various sectors of Israeli life; in traditional novelistic fashion, they have "brought the news," and of course it is hardly ever good news, of their own personal encounters with the realities of life in the army, the kibbutz, the youth movement, the bohemian milieu of the cities, the new immigrant towns.

If one can speak at all of a single theme in the Israeli novel over the past fifteen years, it would have to be disillusionment. In this respect, the position of the Israeli writer now is rather like that of the American writer of the twenties: After the shooting is over, he finds that a national dream has faded with the gunsmoke, and he feels cheated, disheartened, a little embarrassed ever to have been implicated in the naïveté of corporate dreams. Corruption and moral stupidity are not, one would assume, any more pervasive in Israel than elsewhere, but Zionism in its classic pioneering stage was moved by a passionate utopianism, and, after such visions, the con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

frontation with "normalcy" (itself a Zionist ideal for Jewish regeneration) was bound to be painfully disenchanting. This general sense of the passing of a heroic ideal which one finds in Israeli writers is nicely summed up by a striking moment in *The Living on the Dead* (1965), Aharon Meged's most recent novel. The protagonist, occupying the garret of a dead sculptor who, after enjoying a period of fame in the thirties, lived out his life poor and forgotten, discovers in the laundry room a junkpile of abandoned pieces of sculpture, all tributes fashioned in the old forensic style to the generation of heroic builders of the Land: "What pioneers there were in that bathtub and in those laundry pans! Hammer-swingers, wielders of hoes and rakes, bearers of rifles, working girls in kerchiefs, pregnant women, hora dancers, busts of leaders. Ah, dust has covered them all!"

The Living on the Dead provides some helpful insight into the problems of younger Israeli writers because that is its subject and because the artistic uncertainty of its execution is symptomatic of weaknesses found in the work of many of Meged's contemporaries. In general, one is likely to find Israeli novelists a fascinating and exasperating group to follow because, until now, they have shown so much creative and intellectual ferment and so little sustained achievement. Meged is one of five or six Israeli writers who at some point in their career have given promise of unusual talent, only to fall short of its fulfillment. His previous book, *The Fool's Case* (1959), is an imaginative attempt, faltering at first but finally quite impressive, to get to the moral core of Israel's maddeningly bureaucratized society by adopting the narrative procedures of a Kafka novel. After the misadventures of its anonymous clerk, a well-meaning weakling in a meaningless world of blind power, it was possible to hope that Meged would make this symbolic form more fully his own and go on to create an exciting new variety of the Israeli novel. In his most recent book, however, all that is left of Kafka is an unending trial—with symbolic implications, of course —that serves as a framework within which two counterpointed stories are told in conventional fashion, one rather schematically and the other at a pace that is at times dangerously pedestrian.

The protagonist of *The Living on the Dead* is a young writer named Jonas Rabinovitch—Jonas because, like the prophet Jonah, he flees from the responsibility of a message he has been chosen to bear. Jonas has been given a large advance by a publisher to write the biography of a certain Abraham Davidov, a recently deceased

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hero of the old pioneering period of the Palestinian community. The would-be biographer spends his days, more or less, interviewing people who have known Davidov and his nights at The Cellar, a hangout for artists and writers. The contrast between the two is striking, although, after a great deal of reiteration, it becomes a little tiring too: Davidov, in the images Jonas culls of his life from the 1920's on, is seen galloping on horseback against Arab marauders, building roads, draining swamps, ranging the countryside restlessly, singing wildly through the nights, passionately discussing Tolstoi and Gogol till the dawn; the denizens of The Cellar, on the other hand, sit slouched in an alcoholic haze, trying to impress each other with intellectual patter, striking off hollow aphorisms about Art and Reality, and capping verses from Baudelaire, Breton, Ezra Pound. Davidov, it should be said, for all his fire and energy, is seen to have his own kind of inner emptiness, but it is different from the bottomless ennui of Jonas and his friends, and Jonas finds the figure of the pioneer-leader, who is supposed to be a spiritual father of the State, so alien that he simply cannot write the book about him. The publishers take him to court for his failure to produce the promised goods, and, though his attorney tries to allay his fears by assuring him that the case can go on for years, Jonas knows he can write nothing else as long as the Davidov affair remains unsettled.

The argument of the novel is quite clear: Until the Israeli writer finds ways of coming to terms spiritually and intellectually with his immediate national past, he will not be able to function creatively in the present; if his roots extend only to the bottom of a shallow pool of contemporary intellectual life, he will not be able to plumb the unsettling and confusing realities of his own society, and, whatever his subject, that remains a precondition for his art. The idea surely has some validity, and the scheme of the novel might have proved to be a suggestive one if, say, Meged had developed a nuanced psychological comparison of the young writer and the old hero, or perhaps, alternately, if he had handled his whole scheme as parable and elaborated its meaning through a boldly symbolic mode of fiction. The novel he did write, however, could serve as a paradigm for the trap into which an uncritical devotion to conventional realism can lead. One senses that Meged is terribly bent upon *reproducing* bohemian café-society in Tel Aviv, upon reproducing the type of Jew represented in Davidov, and so we get a welter of details about both, but neither Davidov

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nor the habitués of The Cellar can really develop novelistically because they are, finally, only composites of details, and rather predictable details at that. One reviewer of the novel, Ada Tzemah, has made this point trenchantly in noting how the narrator's eye stays at visual surfaces, seeing its objects cinematically, so that the language itself repeatedly falls into catalogues of typifying particulars instead of being worked into artistic patterns that can show forth the realities below the details. The serious novel elsewhere seems largely to have surrendered to the camera its function of merely reproducing milieu because film, with its rapid series of comprehensive images, can do the job far more completely and less tediously than words; but this distinction between media would appear to be one that many Hebrew novelists of the fifties and sixties have chosen to ignore.

Although I have focused on problematic aspects of the enterprise of the native Israeli writers, the general prognosis is by no means bleak. Several recent Hebrew novels have shown real artistic merit, despite flaws of various sorts, and there has been some intelligent interest in formal experiment. In this connection, the novel most worthy of mention is Yehuda Amihai's *Not of This Time and Place* (1963). Although some sections of the book bog down in symbolic contrivances, to a large extent overly conscious imitations of Agnon, Amihai's symbolic imagination is remarkably athletic; he is alert to the expressive possibilities of wrenching narrative form from its conventional patterns, and, in his central action, he renders erotic experience vividly with a genuine lyric freshness while firmly relating it to larger aspects of cultural consciousness.[3] *Not of This Time and Place*, like Amihai's earlier volume of short stories, could benefit from some rigorous editing, but it gives evidence of a talent that could yet enable this writer to become a major novelist.

In any event, the case of Amihai, who is worlds away from Agnon though strongly under his influence, suggests something of the special situation of the Israeli novel in general. It has been in a continual state of transition—a fact which makes generalizations about it unsafe—but the transition is not, as an outsider might suppose, from bare beginnings to a first maturity. Rather, the Hebrew novel has behind it a brief but distinguished tradition of mature achievement, and it has had to move down from the last, greatest pinnacle of that achievement and outward toward another kind of achievement. This fresh beginning is understandable and probably even commendable, but if the new Hebrew novelists are to take

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

full advantage of the unique resources of expression indigenous to their language and cultural past, they cannot afford to turn their backs entirely on their own literary predecessors. Hopefully, as they move closer to the as yet unperceived forms of their own artistic self-realization, they will also find ways to incorporate in their work an imaginative responsiveness to what is extraordinary in the older tradition of Hebrew fiction.

REFERENCES

1. I have discussed in detail this whole problem of the gap between generations of Hebrew novelists in "Israeli Writers and Their Problems," *Commentary*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (July 1962), pp. 20-27.

2. Because of the range of Agnon's work, the brief account given here must necessarily be inadequate. Some of his important fiction is now being translated into English. Schocken House has just published two extremely interesting symbolic *novellen* under the title *Two Tales* (New York, 1966), and it has scheduled for publication early in 1967 a major novel, *A Guest for the Night*. I have tried to give a fuller sense of Agnon's *oeuvre* in "The Genius of S. Y. Agnon," *Commentary*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (August 1961), pp. 105-113. *Nostalgia and Nightmare*, a book-length study of Agnon by Arnold J. Band, will be published by the University of California Press in the summer of 1967.

3. For a full account of Amihai's novel, see my recent article, "Confronting the Holocaust: Three Israeli Novels," *Commentary*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (March 1966), pp. 67-73.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

E. R. MONEGAL

The Contemporary Brazilian Novel

Toward a National Diction

THE VIENNESE writer who called Brazil "The Land of the Future" was offering more than a slogan for Brazilian chauvinism or a pretext for the obvious retort that Brazil will always be the Land of the Future. In Brazil, the *amanhá* is as deeply ingrained in the national character as the *mañana* is in the rest of Latin America. Stefan Zweig's remark implies, nevertheless, a simple but elusive truth: Brazil as a coherent unity does not yet exist. Politically, it has existed since the Grito de Ipiranga (1822) severed the country from Portuguese rule—but not from Portuguese rulers. (D. Pedro, who proclaimed independence, was the son and heir of the King of Portugal.) As a free country, Brazil has existed for nearly a century and a half, but as a national and cultural unity it is still a Land of the Future. Thus, to assume that there is such a thing as a Brazilian novel is to assume too much. There are Brazilian novels, but there is no such thing as *the* Brazilian novel.

Because of the wide differences between the Amazon jungle and the North-East desert, the arid plateau of Minas Gerais and the soft, luxuriant coastline around Rio de Janeiro, the humid forest of Sta. Catarina and the temperate open spaces of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil encompasses a wide variety of cultures. The microcosms that form the macrocosm of Brazil are richly reflected in the novels of the country. The Brazilian novelists of today, like the nineteenth-century novelists of North America, cannot avoid being regional in their writing. For this reason also, the all-embracing Brazilian novel, like that other mythical prototype, the "American novel," does not exist.

Literary critics in Brazil have pointed out the obvious contrasts between fiction written in the North-East—the tragic land of desert and famine, of epic and bloody revolt—and the fiction of the South —the *gaúcho* country of rich grass, cattle, and temperate climate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

similar to the North-American West. They have also discussed the differences between the introspective novelists of Minas Gerais and the more brilliant and extroverted novelists of the large Atlantic ports. But it is as misleading to view Brazilian writing only in terms of a literary map of the country as it is to speak only of the school of southern novelists or of the New York "international" group in writing about the novel in the United States today. Although there is some merit in the approach, it is founded on an erroneous assumption. It implies that the Brazilian novel is conditioned solely by the milieu, that novelists are writing exclusively realistic novels, that the novel, in short, is a documentary form. Twenty or thirty years ago such views were unchallenged in Brazilian literary criticism, as they were in all Latin-American criticism. The impact of Nature over Man in the vast subcontinent, the rediscovery of political commitment by the French school of existentialist writers, and the theories of socialist realism that permeated the Soviet Union were all discussed and widely accepted throughout Latin America. Not only in Brazil, but also in Mexico and Argentina, in Ecuador and Cuba, writers were engaged in mapping out their native lands, describing rivers and mountains, denouncing the local oligarchies or the all-pervading (although not always visible) "American imperialism." In that period, novels were written to show the plight of the Andean Indians or the shocking misery in the spreading slums of Caracas. Very few of these Latin-American novelists were, in fact, concerned with reality. They seldom wrote about men but only about Man. Although their aim was documentary realism, the books they produced were highly stylized exercises in abstract description, pamphlets thinly disguised as novels, or pious tracts.

In Brazil the regionalist movement of the late twenties grew up as a reaction against the extreme academism of Brazilian literature, which was still culturally dependent on Europe. The movement itself had begun somewhat earlier, and, paradoxically enough, its origin lay with a group of writers who felt the need to sever all ties with Portuguese diction and rhetoric. To achieve that, they turned to France and Italy. The Semana de Arte Moderna (Modern Art Week) held in São Paulo in July 1922 had a tremendous impact on the cultural life of the whole country and marked the beginning of a wave of renewal that had important consequences. The group was baptized the "Movimento Modernista"; it should not be confused with Spanish-American *Modernismo,* created some forty years

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

earlier by Rubén Darío and other Latin-American poets under the influence of symbolist poetry and pre-Raphaelite painting.

Although clearly inspired by Italian *Futurismo* and other European "isms," the Semana de Arte Moderna was oriented toward a creative discovery of Brazil. Contact with and imitation of Marinetti and Dada and the surrealists led the Brazilian writers (rather unexpectedly) to a search for Brazilian essences. Mario de Andrade (1893/1945), a poet and critic of a very personal turn of mind, was one of the leaders of the movement. He was among the first to see the dangers of regionalism and to urge the rediscovery of Brazil. His only novel, *Macunaíma* (1928), is a deliberate attempt to produce a poetic narrative based on the whole of Brazilian folklore and to explore the possibilities of a Brazilian language that is as different from the Portuguese as the American idiom is from the British. As a novel, *Macunaíma* is a beautiful failure. Too incoherent, obscure, and episodic, too loosely woven, it has many of the defects of an experimental work like *Ulysses* and few of its virtues. As a milestone, however, *Macunaíma* is a success. It pointed out, at the very beginning of the modernist movement, two extremely important truths: documentary realism is a dead end; language is the first and most critical problem faced by the novelist. Through Macunaíma, the lazy antihero of his novel (*Qué preguiça*—"How tired I feel"—is his slogan, and a national one of a sort), Mario de Andrade showed that the novel could be a mythopoetic creation and need not be a mere recording of reality. By focusing more on language than on plot or characters, de Andrade was dealing with first things first. Unfortunately, *Macunaíma* never managed to be more than a wonderfully lucid and poetic experiment.

In many respects, this attempt in the late twenties ought to be compared with that of Jorge Luis Borges during the same period in Buenos Aires. Borge's short stories, deliberately presented as *Ficciones* (Fictions), emphasized, as *Macunaíma* did, the mythopoetic qualities of narrative imagination and the urge to break with a dead tradition in order to create a truly new Latin-American language. Although Borges was extremely successful in his experiments and became the leader of a small group of writers supported by *Sur* magazine, the main line of Argentine fiction continued until very recently to follow a more realistic and documentary trend. Mario de Andrade was equally successful in changing the literary outlook of Brazil; he indicated the right path, but he apparently got no further. In 1926 a new movement had already grown up as a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

polemical reaction to the São Paulo modernists. A renewed emphasis on regionalism marked the North-East group that challenged the Paulistas.

Regionalism as a Dead End

The starting point of the countermovement was the Primeiro Congresso de Regionalistas do Nordeste (First Congress of North-East Regionalists) that met in Recife in 1926. If São Paulo represents the dynamic, modern Brazil of the nineteen-sixties, the North-East in the twenties represented the Brazil that was left behind by the new industrialism. It was the region of the obsolete economy of the sugar-cane industry, the decaying feudal world of slaveholders' heirs, and the marginal society of poor *retirantes,* internal emigrants who periodically ran away from the arid hinterland. In many respects, the land combined the harsh realities and nightmarish visions familiar to the readers of Sherwood Anderson, William Faulkner, or John Steinbeck.

Inspired by men like the sociologist Gilberto Freyre (b. 1900), the Congress of North-East Regionalists saw the beginning of an important literary movement—it put the North-East on the map of Brazilian fiction. It did this with a vitality and splendor that tended to conceal the fact that the novel of the North-East is not *the* Brazilian novel. One of the classics of Brazilian sociology, Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertoes* (*Rebellion in the Backlands*), written in 1902, had already explored the vast epic possibilities of that corner of Brazil; in *Casa Grande e Senzala* (*Masters and Slaves*), Freyre, in 1933, added to Da Cunha's poetic insight his own large and meticulous vision of a decadent feudal past.

Starting with writers like José Américo de Almeida (whose *A Bagaceira,* 1928, was a pioneering work) and Raquel de Queiroz (who, before she was twenty, wrote *O Quinze,* a classical, spare document on the *retirantes,* published in 1930), the novelists of the North-East, including Graciliano Ramos, José Lins do Rêgo, and Jorge Amado, soon became known throughout Brazil. Of these novelists, only Jorge Amado has achieved international fame. A follower of the Communist leader Luiz Carlos Prestes (whose biography he wrote), Amado was widely translated in the socialist countries. He has also achieved success in the United States; one of his books, *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (*Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*), 1958, was the first Latin-American novel to become a best

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seller in the States. The American edition, published in 1962, was reviewed on the front page of *The New York Times Book Review*. Recently, *Hopscotch* (*Rayuela*), a finer and infinitely more creative book by the Argentine Julio Cortázar, also received a front-page review in *The New York Times*.

Despite his international success, however, Amado is not so highly regarded by critics in Brazil as are Lins do Rêgo and Graciliano Ramos. The reasons are obvious. Amado, a born story-teller and a writer of great charm, was until recently one of the sincere followers of the sterile theories of socialist realism. His first books (particularly those in the *Cacau* cycle) are mere tracts, occasionally relieved by graphic and near-pornographic descriptions of life in the North-East plantations and big-city slums. *Jubiabá*, which appeared in 1935, is an extravagant novel, a kind of Grand-Guignolesque suite of horrors, presented as a piece of documentary realism on the social situation in or around Bahía in the thirties. Since 1956, when the Soviet leaders officially declared a thaw in the restrictions placed on literature, Amado has felt free to write novels in a purely narrative vein. *Gabriela* is perhaps his best: the characters are alive, the local color brilliant, and Gabriela charming. But its shortcomings as a novel are obvious. It never moves beneath the surface; the language, although adequate, is rarely creative. Amado, like O'Hara in the United States, or Maugham in England, is a master of the obvious, the typical, and the superfluous.

More interesting is the case of Lins do Rêgo (1901/1957). He also started with a cycle of novels on the sugar-cane culture, but his approach is totally different from Amado's. Lins do Rêgo wrote not with a Marxist blueprint in hand, but out of his experiences as a boy born and educated in the sugar mills. He was the son of the owners; what he wrote in rich, chaotic, and undisciplined prose was his own remembrance of things past. Like *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926), a masterpiece by the Argentine Ricardo Güiraldes, his books are full of nostalgic memory. Lins do Rêgo had a less poetic and more comprehensive vision of his world than did Güiraldes. He wrote with bravura and feeling, and with a deep personal concern for the harsh reality of the North-East. His blueprint was the work of his master, Gilberto Freyre, to whose charming theories and observations he contributed his own experience, enriched by literary contact (in Alagoas, during his formative years) with people like Raquel de Queiroz and Graciliano Ramos.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Later, the success of his novels and his long residence in Rio de Janeiro attenuated the warmth and immediacy of his reporting. While in Rio de Janeiro he completed three of his more ambitious novels: *Pedra Bonita* (1938), *Fogo Morto* (1943), and *Cangaceiros* (1953). Writing now from a purely narrative point of view and not simply from his memories of the sugar-cane world, Lins do Rêgo showed his limitations as a novelist. Only the first novel is a really solid piece of work. This fictional account of a mystical rebellion in the deserts of the North-East, kindled by a fanatic who pretends to be a new Christ (and perhaps believes it), is presented through the eyes of a very young boy, Antonio Bento, a descendant of the fanatic. The story pursues two layers of time—one present, one remote—that merge at the end of the novel. The point of view is both distant and immediate.

Lins do Rêgo did not possess the creative powers to achieve his ambition; his last two really important pieces of fiction clearly demonstrate this. While *Fogo Morto* is occasionally relieved by the vigor of certain of the characters, such as the captain, Vittorino Carneiro da Cunha, *Cangaceiros* relies too heavily on the basic appeal of its subject: the colorful bandits of the North-East desert. In balance, Lins do Rêgo's limitations as a novelist do not obliterate his achievements. In many respects he was moving in the right direction. He had discovered that documentary novels must depend on the imaginative transcription of language as it is in fact spoken. From São Paulo, Mario de Andrade had fought hard to free Brazilian Portuguese from the diction and grammar of the old metropolis. (In Spanish America, the main fight was fortunately concluded by the middle of the nineteenth century.) Although Lins do Rêgo opposed many of the European influences that pervaded the São Paulo movement, he shared de Andrade's concern about spoken Brazilian. While de Andrade's aim was really to replace an old-fashioned rhetoric with a new one, Lins do Rêgo sometimes created the impression that he wanted only to eliminate all rhetoric. In his novels, which are characterized by great freedom of speech, he attempted to transcribe the "real" language of his characters. What he lacked was the discipline to keep the spoken language continually creative. Because of his effort to be faithful to the actual words and sounds used by people, he occasionally became literal, monotonous, and ungrammatical to the point of distraction. The result often justified the charges of certain of his critics that he wrote badly.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Up to a point, Amado and Lins do Rêgo did not really care about good writing and relied, sometimes too heavily, on their storyteller's intuition. Among the North-East novelists, the writer who did care about good writing was the novelist most Brazilian critics hail as the best of that period: Graciliano Ramos (1892/1953). Ramos was as marginal in his job as a civil servant on the fringes of the North-East as the North-East itself was marginal to the new Brazil. An introvert, shy to the point of total silence, Ramos was reticent to publish his first book. He was forty-one when *Caetés* appeared in 1933. Ramos learned to read when he was nine; his formal education was sketchy. During his early years, he was influenced by Gorki and by some of the masters of his native language, including the Portuguese novelist Eça de Queiroz and the Brazilians Euclides da Cunha and Raul Pompéia.

Some critics have proclaimed Ramos' *Vidas sêcas* (1937) a masterpiece of the regional novel. The judgment is debatable, but, even if it is not a masterpiece, it is an impressive book and the best of his works—though some people prefer his autobiographical *Infancia* (1945). *Vidas sêcas,* which describes the plight of a family in the *Sertâo* of the North-East, is written in a spare and economical style. Each of its chapters is autonomous (in fact, they were originally published as separate short stories), and the whole structure of the novel reveals a great concern with form and style. Although Graciliano Ramos avoids psychological analysis in this book (he indulged in it in a previous novel, *Angustia,* 1936), he manages to reveal, more by implication than by direct statement, the inner life of his destitute characters through their relationship with the milieu and with animals. The sun, a dog, and a shadow are as legitimate characters in this tale as the human beings are.

Ramos was a silent man, and *Vidas sêcas* is a silent book—the kind that needs frequent reading to reveal itself. With the perspective of nearly three decades, it is easy to discover that it fails precisely because of what appeared to be its virtues at the time of its publication in the thirties. In a period when the vital books of Amado and the loosely constructed novels of Lins do Rêgo were best sellers, *Vidas sêcas* was a lesson in austerity, in depth of observation, and in antiheroic attitudes toward a stark and cruel reality. Since the late thirties, new literary forces have transformed Graciliano Ramos into a respected but not deeply influential master. Lins do Rêgo once called him "Mestre Graciliano." The title was well deserved, but during the last ten years Brazilian

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

novelists have discovered another master: João Guimaraes Rosa. Paradoxically, his first book was published the same year as *Vidas sêcas,* but, instead of ending a creative trend, *Sagarana* was opening a new one.

Mestre Guimaraes

The problem of regionalism as it was discussed in the twenties and thirties in Latin America is a false one. It was presented as primarily geographical rather than literary. From a strictly literary point of view, all novels are regional because they belong to a certain linguistic area. For example, the first novel of modern times, *Don Quixote,* is about an imaginary knight in a forgotten region of the Spanish empire; *Madame Bovary* is about a lady daydreamer who has read too many romantic novels in her sordid French province; and *The Brothers Karamazov* is about a bunch of drunkards, inflamed by mystical thoughts, in a small Russian village. But it is not only the so-called realistic novels that are strictly localized by language and *Weltanschauung.* The fantastic novels are also regional. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is as nationally rooted in eighteenth-century neoclassical prose as Voltaire's *Candide,* but their views of the world reveal different national characters. Kafka's *The Trial* and *The Castle* overwhelm the reader with the most concrete Central-European minutiae and with an Old Testament notion of guilt. When Borges writes about Scandinavian or Chinese or Irish heroes, he is always writing about an enormous library, filled with British books, in a cosmopolitan suburb of the world: Buenos Aires. It does not actually matter very much what the writer's geographical situation is. What really matters is the nature of his approach to reality. From this point of view, some books are more regional than others because they tend to present only the typical aspects of a given place and milieu, only the local color—never moving beneath the surface of what they are describing. It is the difference in depth, and not the difference in subject matter, that makes Amado more regional than Ramos.

João Guimaraes Rosa (b. 1908) managed to be universal in his outlook without being unconcerned with his own native territory. So far, he has published one book of very short short-stories, two books of *nouvelles,* and one novel—not very much by the standards of some of his colleagues. Today, he is acclaimed as the greatest Brazilian writer and one of the best in Latin America. Originally

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

published in 1956, his only novel, *Grande Sertâo: Veredas* (*The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*), is written in the form of a monologue. Riobaldo, the protagonist, was once a bandit or *jagunço*, as they are called in the *Sertâo*; he is now an honorable rancher, growing old. The monologue—which proceeds almost without pause, though the narrator stops occasionally to answer some unrecorded questions put to him by an unknown listener—describes Riobaldo's life of love and adventure. The unknown listener is a more ambiguous character than the interlocutors used, for example, by Conrad in his novels. Yet it is for the listener's benefit that the protagonist tells his story. Every monologue needs a haunted listener (as the Ancient Mariner well knew) because his presence justifies the confessional attitude and implies at the same time that there is some deep secret that will be revealed. Riobaldo, of course, has a secret.

Riobaldo's monologue creates a world. It is the world of the Minas Gerais backlands, a high and deserted country that borders on the northeastern *Sertâo*, a smaller desert which had already been explored by Brazilian novelists and sociologists. Guimaraes Rosa once told me with visible pride that, compared to the Minas Gerais, the *Sertâo* is but a fringe of desert, not far from the coast and the sea. The title of his novel, literally translated, indicates this extra dimension of land, *Big Desert: Little Rivers*. Compared to the enormousness of Minas Gerais, his long book is the record of only a small excursion.

The world that Riobaldo evokes is a violent one of treason and burning rivalries, of misery and exploitation, of a territory run by bandits, politicians, and a ruthless army. The story is set in the late nineteenth century, but the problems Guimaraes Rose describes are still very much alive, as today's headlines prove. The novelist is not really concerned with the documentary aspects of the world about which he is writing. Like some of his more brilliant counterparts in the Spanish-American fiction of today (such as Alejo Carpentier of Cuba and Julio Cortázar of Argentina), Guimaraes Rosa does not overlook the misery or exploitation around him—but he knows that reality goes deeper than that. His experiences as a country doctor and later as an army doctor made him familiar not only with the men of the region but also with their inexhaustible language. Through the artistic re-creation of this spoken language, he manages to convey the whole reality of this brutal and tragic land. His childhood was spent listening to old men telling tall

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stories about the fierce and bloody bandits of the *Sertâo,* the grotesque errant knights of a dubious crusade. In his youth, he traveled extensively through the strange, hard, haunting landscape of the Gerais, spent a great deal of time exploring very small towns or pacing down roads that led to nowhere, and became intimately acquainted with the squalor and misery of his very wealthy country. His life was a quest for a creative language.

Through a technique and sensibility that were molded by the experimental writing of the twenties and thirties (his debts to Joyce, Proust, Mann, Faulkner, and Sartre are obvious), Guimaraes Rosa, in *Grande Sertâo: Veredas,* plays with time and space, telescopes events and persons. He uses the most shameless conventions of melodrama and never slips into the stale conventions of documentary realism. Indeed, he even makes fun of these conventions, sustaining (like Cervantes) a subtle note of parody from the beginning to the end of his tale. One of the best-kept secrets of Riobaldo's monologue, for example, is the name of his real father. When it is discovered, the whole book assumes the form of a quest for identity, one of the basic literary themes since the Greeks. The most sensational secret, however, is the real nature of Diadorim, the protagonist's closest friend and constant companion, a young man of unusual beauty and purity to whom Riobaldo feels sexually attracted, though he fights against this. Playing on the ambiguity of this relationship, Guimaraes Rosa transmutes a melodramatic cliché into a deep insight concerning the nature of desire. Thomas Mann would have liked this book, and Italo Calvino could have recognized in it some of the motives and ironies of his *Cavaliere inesistente* (1959).

As the best Brazilian critics have already pointed out, *Grande Sertâo: Veredas* is in many respects similar to the medieval *Novela de Cavalaria,* the epic fiction of the errant knights that Cervantes parodied in *Don Quixote.* Like those prototypes, Riobaldo is inspired by honor, by unearthly love, by pure friendship, by a noble cause; and he fights against treason, carnal temptations, the obscure power of darkness. The vast, sprawling intricacies of accidental meetings and unexplained separations, brusque discoveries of a hidden past, and tragic anagnorisis that constitute the plot are projected, as Professor Cavalcanti Proença has pointed out, in different layers of meaning: the individual, the collective, the mythical. The whole novel is divided into episodes that are carefully interwoven into the fabric of Riobaldo's monologue, as the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

medieval rhetoricists advised; even the technique derives from this type of novel, so popular in the late Middle Ages. In Spanish America, one of the most promising young novelists, the Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa, reflects the same model in his most recent novel, *La Casa Verde* (1966). That Vargas Llosa wrote this splendid book without any direct knowledge of Guimaraes Rosa's masterpiece (Brazil is less connected with the rest of Latin America than with Europe or the United States) shows that there are some deep undercurrents that link the epic style of the *Novela de Cavalaria* and the narrative style of some Latin-American writers today. The feudal world of the Peruvian jungle or the Minas Gerais *Sertâo* somehow matches the feudal world of the late Middle Ages.

But the real theme of *Grande Sertâo: Veredas* is diabolical possession. Riobaldo is convinced that he has entered into a pact with the devil, that it was the devil who first drove him to a life of perversity and crime. But his is not the classical devil of cloven hoof and ironic mien. Guimaraes Rosa's devil is everywhere: a voice in the desert, a whisper in the conscience, a sudden glance that is full of temptation, the irresistible depravity of a powerful bandit. By the devil's side, in this morality tale, stands the figure of an angel, the beautiful and ambiguous Diadorim. But this is a modern morality tale, and therefore not a simple one, so Guimaraes Rosa's angel and his devil are not always clearly distinguishable. Torn between good and evil, often unable to decide which is which, Riobaldo vacillates, beset by doubt and anguish.

At the center of this epic tale—full of battles, murders, and sudden death—is the story of a soul divided between love and hatred, friendship and enmity, superstition and faith. It is nothing less than a mythopoetic creation, a literary microcosm of the component elements of Guimaraes Rosa's own huge, chaotic, angel-and-devil-ridden Brazilian motherland.

If *Grande Sertâo: Veredas* is an allegory, it is an allegory that is saved from pure abstraction by the concrete poetry of diction and character. Hesitantly at first, then more and more easily as the long tale gathers momentum, it manages to take on the pure narrative charm of a Western. As the sheer force of the narrative takes over, a whole world is re-created through language. Guimaraes Rosa's relation to the world of the *jagunços* is indirect and distant. Unlike Euclides da Cunha's masterpiece, which was based on his own experiences during a campaign that ended the bloody rebellion of one of the most famous Northeastern *jagunços*, this novel was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

written from tales told by survivors, tales rewritten by Guimaraes Rosa's imagination. For the novelist, this distance in time and in direct experience was more advantageous than the closeness of Da Cunha's sociological reporting. By his very detachment, Guimaraes Rosa was able to get nearer to the core of things. What happened to him while he was writing about the *jagunços*' world is similar to what happened to Sarmiento when he wrote Facundo's biography and described the *pampa* in 1845. The Argentine author had never been in the *pampa,* although he had lived not far from it. What he knew about it came from hearsay and the accounts of English travelers, who were the first to attempt to write about its vastness and desolation. In effect, Sarmiento re-created in Spanish what was actually a foreign vision, but, despite this, he "nationalized" the *pampa* through his style. The same double point of view operates in *Grande Sertâo: Veredas.* Guimaraes Rosa has used his own experience of the *Sertâo* and documents gathered by people like Da Cunha to evoke, in the language of an imaginary *jagunço,* the world of the Brazilian backlands in the late nineteenth century.

Every phrase of this novel is written as if it were a line in a poem. The invisible but omnipresent structure of verbal sound is as important as the story itself. The distribution of accents in each phrase and the general movement of each paragraph sometimes reveal more about the real mood of the protagonist than any given situation or episode. This is the main reason why, at the beginning of the long monologue, Guimaraes Rosa makes his protagonist so reluctant to tell the full story of his life; why Riobaldo is so reticent and ambiguous about Diadorim and about his pact with the devil; why he begins to confess in earnest only when the flow of memory, the incessant stream of evocation, possesses him completely. The narrative then mounts and accelerates. The last quarter of the novel is completely free of asides, of mental reservations, of the relentless activities of the inner censor. When the confession comes to a climax, the novel ends. The catharsis is complete.

It is this peculiarity of style that accounts for the difficulties Guimaraes Rosa's novel presents to translators and even to readers of Portuguese. In fact, the American translation (done with tremendous care by James L. Taylor and Harriett de Onís) reads much more easily than the original, for to a certain extent the translators were forced to simplify and explicate the text. According to the author, only the recent Italian translation of *Corpo de*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Baile, a volume of *nouvelles*, and the German version of *Grande Sertâo: Veredas* achieve the almost impossible task of being both faithful to the original and readable. Translating Guimaraes Rosa is like translating Joyce: his, too, is a purely verbal world.

O Novo Romance

The deep regionalism of Guimaraes Rosa's fictional world is not the only answer to the regionalist challenge of the thirties. While Ramos, do Rêgo, and Amado were developing the North-East movement, writers in other parts of Brazil were exploring new possibilities. In the plateau of Minas Gerais, Cyro dos Anjos (b. 1900) and Lucio Cardoso (b. 1913) were creating a more introspective type of fiction; in the vast spaces of the South, Erico Verissimo (b. 1905, in Rio Grande do Sul) was achieving fame through novels written in a more international idiom. None of these writers, however, succeeded, as Guimaraes Rosa had, in crossing the very subtle line that separates the regional from the universal. Even Rosa was not always successful. While European critics praised him, the North Americans reacted with indifference. Misled by critics who did not understand or perhaps even read his novel, the American public let *Grande Sertâo: Veredas* pass almost unnoticed in 1963. It is a pity because Rosa's work deserves a wider audience.

During the last ten years or so, a new group of Brazilian writers has been experimenting with a form that has been baptized *O Novo Romance Brasileiro*. The term *novo romance* acknowledges the influence of the *nouveau roman* and, to a degree, underlines the deep cultural ties that still exist between Brazil and France. (This is less true of the new group of Spanish-American novelists, who are strongly attracted to the Anglo-Saxon world as well.) But if some of the *novo romance* is only an adaptation of the *nouveau roman*, the best of it is really a new movement. Among the prominent novelists now writing in Brazil, Clarice Lispector is one of the most widely respected. She is not alone in the field: Maria Alice Barroso, Adonias Filho, Mario Palmeiro, and Nélida Piñón are also recognized as important or promising new novelists. But Clarice Lispector is the acknowledged master of the experimental fiction of the sixties.

She has already produced five novels: *Perto do Coraçâo Selvagem* (1944), *O Lustre* (1946), *A cidade sitiada* (1949), *A Maça*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no escuro (1961), and *A Paixâo segundo G. H.* (1964). She has also published three volumes of short stories. Her first three novels passed almost unnoticed at the time they were published. Success came with her last two novels, which are undoubtedly her best. But success, even of a very limited and specialized kind, is something that cannot affect Lispector's attitude toward her fiction. She writes to fulfill a very tyrannical vocation and because she cannot stop. What she writes has very little to do with what is fashionable at the time. Up to a point, her attitude is similar to that of Graciliano Ramos: They are both reticent and very personal in their approach, although their works have very little else in common.

Her last two novels reveal a turn of mind and an imagination deeply involved with a quest for reality, a determination to force appearances, and a burning desire to grasp the core of things. To a degree, she can be compared to Virginia Woolf (as some of her critics have suggested) because of her rather obsessive philosophical attitude and obviously feminist bias. But it would be wrong to believe that Clarice Lispector is simply turning back the clock of fiction. In a sense, her novels are poetic novels, but they seek to go further than Virginia Woolf's experimental novels of the twenties and thirties. While the author of *To the Lighthouse* was influenced by writers like Frazer, Bergson, and Joyce, Lispector is influenced by the contemporary school of social and psychoanalytical anthropologists. In a very subtle way, her whole enterprise is linked with the one prematurely attempted by Mario de Andrade. As one of her critics pointed out recently, her novels are mythopoetic creations in which morose, and even exasperating, explorations of a given reality are reflected in very primitive types of consciousness. It has also been noted by the same critic that her two most recent novels retrace from the so-called primitive mind man's discovery of philosophical consciousness. According to José Américo Motta Pessanha, the mythical consciousness of man that Lispector explored in episodes of her previous novels and in her short stories is fully organized into a mythology in *A Maça no escuro*. The plight of this novel's main character becomes a symbol of the hero's return to the origins, to the roots, to the native land. In *A Paixâo segundo G. H.*, the problem of the origins of everything is presented in a more philosophical vein. Phenomenology and existentialism help Lispector to search beneath the surface of man's consciousness. Her task becomes increasingly more difficult and hard to follow. Quite

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recently, one of her most successful short stories, "O Ovo e a Galinha" ("The Egg and the Hen"), presents subliminal, almost quartet-like variations on an age-old question.

But even if one fears that Lispector's philosophical assumptions are sometimes a bit too lofty (it is easy to predict that they will be considered so by the generally pragmatic North-American reviewers when the forthcoming translation of *A Maça no escuro* is published in the United States), her skill in creating a totally fictitious world, her hypnotic power to extract from words, simple words, all their incantatory virtues, and the single-mindedness of her tragic vision tend to act on the reader as a charm. In *A Maça no escuro* (*Apple in the Dark*), the inner struggle of a man who believes he murdered his wife is the pretext for an unmitigated exploration of man's grasp of reality (both external and internal), of his power to cope with concrete objects, of his insertion into a foreign and always hostile environment—the world. At the beginning of the novel the man becomes lost in a desert, and in this emptiness even words are hard to find. In *A Paixâo segundo G. H.*, the main character, a woman, talks endlessly. She is trying to understand, trying very hard and obsessively to understand reality. Her effort to grasp the naked reality of the present moment and to recover her own soul reveals her *passion*, a word Lispector uses deliberately in a double sense, the Greek (to suffer) and the Christian. Paradoxically, the use of religious language in this novel indicates her profane turn of mind. As one Brazilian critic has remarked, the religious language serves to mask her vision. It is an oblique way of de-sacralizing the real world just as the effort to rediscover a primitive mode of consciousness in her previous novel revealed the intention of destroying the assumptions of rational psychology. Both novels are at the beginning of a new and private mythology.

Part of Lispector's works is lost to the common reader. What he generally finds is a brilliant and hard surface, a very morose tale, mysterious characters that suffer from some obscure disease of the mind. Captured by her prose, the reader discovers, in her novels, that everyday reality becomes hallucinatory. At the same time, hallucinations are presented as commonplace. Because of her mythological turn of mind, she is more a sorceress than a writer. Her novels show the incredible power of words to act on the reader's imagination and sensitivity. On the whole, she has proved, going by a different route, what Guimaraes Rosa has also demonstrated: the importance of language in the novel.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

All her work reveals an almost maniacal determination to use the right word, to exhaust the possibilities of each word, to build up a solid structure of words. Her last two novels are written like poems. They demand of their reader a concentration similar to that required by the best contemporary poetry. Once I asked Guimaraes Rosa what he thought of Clarice Lispector's work. He told me very candidly that every time he read one of her novels he learned many new words and rediscovered new uses for the ones he already knew. But, at the same time, he admitted that he was not very receptive to her incantatory style. He felt it was alien to him. His reaction is not unique and explains Lispector's limitations as a novelist. Critics often talk about some form of art that needs an acquired taste. Lispector's novels belong to this category, I think, while Guimaraes Rosa's have a more universal appeal.

The Latin-American Context

What Rosa and Lispector represent in the Brazilian novel of the last decade is the new trend in Latin-American fiction. Nineteenth-century realism tended to obscure a novelist's obligation to present more than individual characters, social or national descriptions, ideas or beliefs. This realism overshadowed the fact that a novelist's fight is mainly with language. Flaubert, Henry James, and Conrad had already shown the way to a new type of fiction, widely conscious of its dependence on language, structure, and style. The experimental novel of the twenties and thirties in Europe and the United States made this commonplace. But in Latin America it took the writers some time to discover and accept it. Only in the last decade has it become obvious in Latin-American fiction. The works of pioneers like Borges and the Guatemalan Miguel Angel Asturias, of people like Alejo Carpentier of Cuba, Onetti of Uruguay, Juan Rulfo of Mexico, Ernesto Sábato and Julio Cortázar of Argentina made the Spanish-American novelist widely aware that documentary (or socialist) realism is finished; that regionalism as a mere expression of local color is dead; that the novelist's real and only commitment is to his personal vision and craft. The emergent new writers such as Carlos Fuentes in Mexico, Gabriel García Márquez in Colombia, Mario Vargas Llosa in Peru, José Domoso in Chile, and Carlos Martínez Moreno in Uruguay followed this creative and deeply literary line, like their counterparts of the new Brazilian novel.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For the new novelists of Latin America, the center of gravity has shifted radically—from a landscape created by God to a landscape created by men and inhabited by men. The *pampas* and the *cordillera* have yielded to the great city. For the older novelists the city was no more than a remote presence, arbitrary and mysterious; for these new writers, the city is the axis, the place to which the protagonist of their novels is ineluctably drawn. The somewhat depersonalized vision of the novelists of the beginning of the century has reacquired flesh and blood. Suddenly, powerful, complex fictional beings are emerging from the anonymous masses of the great cities. This dramatic change corresponds sociologically with the growth of the conurbations, but also reflects the spreading influence of psychoanalysis. This change has not spared the novelists who adhere, by and large, to rural themes. Even if, on the surface, they still record the traditional struggle of man against nature, the characters they are now presenting are no longer abstractions or ciphers that justify some political or sociological approach. They are complex and ambiguous human beings. A forerunner of this new vision, the River Plate storyteller Horacio Quiroga discovered early in this century that the natives of Misiones and the outcasts of the European world who were stranded there could be as sophisticated as people living in big cities. The Brazilian novelists no longer write epics of pure and exploited *campesinos* and *gaúchos* and *indios*, with their two-dimensional characterization, their "documentary" mechanical structure. The cities and their chaotic inhabitants monopolize the attention of the younger novelists. Today, in Latin America's great sprawling cities—Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Lima—each of the young writers aspires to be a Balzac, a Joyce, a Dos Passos, a Sartre.

Yet these new novelists do more than imitate European and American models. Though linked to these models by a continuous, living tradition, and by a study of their technique and vision, the new novelists have an acute social and political awareness. They combine this awareness with a remarkable subtlety and a personal engagement that is marked by sensitivity to other, transcendental dimensions. Through these men, Latin America shows its face to the world and communicates its hopes and despairs. A new man is emerging from the chaos and revolutions, and the Latin-American novelists are the mentors of this new man. Because of their efforts, the Latin-American novel is beginning to take wing and rise above its present linguistic limits. The novels are being translated, dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

covered, and discussed in Europe and the United States; the number of international prizes they win and their foreign editions are beginning to multiply. Latin-American writers are now having some impact on milieux that had been, until quite recently, rather unreceptive to their works. Perhaps not since the introduction of the Russian novelists into nineteenth-century France, or the modern Americans into postwar Europe, have similar potentialities existed, both for Latin-American writers and for their readers overseas.

In the present situation of the Western novel, dominated by the arid writers of the *nouveau roman* or by the secluded, personal fiction of the best American, British, or Italian novelists, the all-embracing and over-confident attitude of the new Latin-American novelists is worth considering. An enterprise of such vastness and courage—the portrayal of a whole new society and the representation of a contradictory, still unclassified type of man—is seldom attempted with such vigor in our days. It is easy to believe that the Latin-American novelists have a vision to communicate and to share: the common vision of a continent that is torn by revolution and inflation, but also emboldened by anger and mounting expectations, by its awareness that it speaks for a truly emerging world.

To this continental task, the Brazilian novelists of this century have already made a great contribution. In the works of the best novelists a very clear line of development can be traced—the line of anti-documentary and extra-realistic fiction. Mario de Andrade's *Macunaíma* first revealed this development, but more as a possibility than as an achievement. It was visible occasionally in some of the novels of Lins do Rêgo and Graciliano Ramos, but it achieved concrete form in Guimaraes Rosa's vast fictional world. It is bravely if obscurely present in Clarice Lispector's hard, uncompromising books. It is the line of writers who believe in the re-creation of a whole reality through language: the old line of literature.

A Note on Translations

Alfred A. Knopf published Jorge Amado's *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* in 1962; Guimaraes Rosa's *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands* in 1963; Guimaraes Rosa's first book, *Sagarana* (a cycle of nine related but independent tales set in Minas Gerais), and José Lins do Rêgo's *Plantation Boy* (the first three volumes of his sugarcane cycle) in 1966. It is also planning to publish this year a second novel by Jorge Amado and Clarice Lispector's *Apple in the Dark.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CZESLAW MILOSZ

The Novel in Poland

The Editor
Dædalus

Dear Sir:

You asked me to write on the novel in Poland. I gave just an outline, no more than sketchy information. You may wonder why my piece is dry to the extent that one is unable to guess my own personal views on the subject. I feel I should explain my reticence.

On the contemporary novel written in Polish or in any other language, I have very little to say. I am confused and would like to see people who are not confused. There are some portents that should not be overlooked. Starting with my own reactions, I have to force myself to read a novel as if warned in advance by the boredom emanating from the devices one knows so well. To my surprise, I have discovered that many young Americans, if I may judge by Berkeley students, avoid novels, even if they are quite zealous readers of poetry, essays, and philosophy. Is it not significant that the only fad in fiction on the Berkeley campus has been of late (besides Candy*) fantasies of Tolkien, which hardly fit what is generally meant by "a novel"? In Poland today, the novel is certainly not considered a dominating genre. I sense in this a curious parallelism, a sign, perhaps, of a too much scorned* Zeitgeist.

*Good luck to novelists. I have written two novels: one bad, hastily jotted down for an international contest (which I won); another, probably not quite so bad, praised by readers, who accepted it as a kind of autobiographical story of my childhood in the woods of Lithuania. It seems to me that my readers' penchant toward interpreting it as "authentic" (while it is rather an exercise in disguised metaphysics) should be a lesson. They yearn after Daddy Defoe. Is it not so, that he set the pace forever and that any attempt to go beyond a "true story" and a "true romance" is doomed to failure? In any case, if what is good in my novel (*Dolina Issy—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tal der Issa *in German,* Sur les bords de l'Issa *in French) is a result of my training as a poet, why should I write novels? I am interested in capturing whatever can be captured of a large Whole, not in inventing situations.*

Another confession. I like to read books on the novel, such as L'Histoire du roman moderne *by R. M. Alberès. Here, I touch upon a shameful, unconfessed spot in the consciousness of modern man. He prefers books on the novel, on poetry, or on drama, to the novels, poems, or dramas themselves. Is he wrong? Not necessarily. His meditation on the changeability of styles and beliefs, let us call it anthropological meditation, is more vast than what creative writers are able to convey. And in every creative writer today there is a certain shame, a struggle of his awareness, his intelligence, against his means, which are always obsolete.*

I agree with Camus when, in his L'homme revolté, *he defends fiction. We know that when a man tries to tell nothing but the truth about himself, in diaries or memoirs, he lies much more than when he invents characters and plots, calling a boy whom he loved Albertine. Thus, only through the falsity of a convention can he tell something about his life experience. He will not renounce that urge, which in a crude form reveals itself in drunken confessions mumbled to a barman. So fiction will exist. Unfortunately we look more and more on our (extraordinary) experiences as commonplace, something that happens to Everyman. And instead of a novel, we are writing a medieval morality play on the Sinner. Where is the place for our (extraordinary) affairs with Julia or Judith if we are all sad flesh soaring above our confines with a feeling of self-pity and universal compassion?*

Undoubtedly, the novel's strength stems from a curiosity about a reality that is veiled yet cognizable. All the work of Balzac tends toward penetrating the secret of the big city, of its mythical center where innumerable human fates crisscross at a given moment. Yet Balzac also needed an act of faith in the adequacy of his tool, and this is why he defined his goal in the Preface to his Human Comedy: *to write a natural history of society. The novel thrives probably in an intermediary zone between mimesis, which threatens it with an invasion of false or valid poetry, and argument, which beyond certain limits degenerates into publicism. Many people today make sour faces at the sallies of Tolstoi, the polemicist, in* War and Peace, *as something "unartistic." They forget that had it not been for Tolstoi's passionate commitment to unraveling events, commenting, exposing*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his opinions, his epic would never have been written. We live in a time when a defense of "purity" in art is already an automatic reflex. This means that genuflections before art are permitted under one condition, namely, that it keep within its own specific sphere. The meaning of the adjective specific *varies, but nearly always it denotes "away from discourse." Poetry can cope with this situation and even find a way out. A friend of mine, an eminent Polish poet of the younger generation, said in a letter to me that poetry for him is nearly identical with the search of pre-Socratic philosophers and with Gnosis. That is, more or less, what I think too. Yet the principle of prose is completely different. Whatever might be advanced to the contrary, the severe, "bare," rational, Stendhalian sentence remains its ideal. A belief in rational cognition, not "specific cognition" through art, seems inseparable from any healthy prose. Unfortunately, contemporary thought is very complex; it discourages the novelist who once upon a time used to be an investigator in sociology, economics, and psychology. The creative writer is left with the enigma of existence as his only theme, with a gigantic commonplace. What material for a novel could be drawn out of* Ah, les beaux jours *of Samuel Beckett? I am not convinced by the poetry that is published nowadays so often under the label of "novels." Poetry has a discipline of its own; it should stick to its peculiar ways. Not that I am against mixing the literary genres, on the contrary; but poetry assimilates various prosaisms much better than prose tolerates injections of objective correlatives.*

Perhaps all my skepticism boils down to my view of the writer as a reasonable human being. As such, he is confronted by a reality that resists his attempts at rational ordering, both in the sense of cognition and action. His feeling of impotence in the face of man-created absurdity makes him jealous of the great novelists of the past, who trusted their vocation as pathfinders. There is one, quite unpopular, truth that should be pronounced aloud even if it is just saying that the king is naked: a man paralyzed in the exercise of his intelligence and of his will cannot write good novels. Today, he is tossed around by mechanisms endowed with an inhuman logic of their own so he looks for more cryptic means of taking revenge—intellectual acrobatics of essay or images of poetry with their multiple layers of meaning.

You may be surprised by my dichotomy: poetry and prose. To put it simply, I believe poetry is more sturdy, better rooted in the tradition of innumerable millennia, and probably better prepared

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for protean transformations. Fiction will exist, but as for its present status we seem to have returned not to the "true adventures" of Eulenspiegel, but to that phase when a sermon, a poem, a dramatic poem on the stage, a wary and circumspect confession of a Montaigne found themselves on the borderline separating the known from the unknown. *C.M.*

THE TREMENDOUS new reading public that grew up in Poland as a result of the elimination of illiteracy finds that contemporary fiction only partially satisfies its nostalgia for interesting plots. Novels of the past, either in the original language or translation, that preserve the art of narrative in its traditional form constitute the fare of most Polish readers. Memoirs and diaries also enjoy great popularity—which is easily understandable in a country with many centuries of turbulent history. As for Polish novels of the nineteenth century, the very names of their authors are often completely unknown in the West—for instance, that of Ignacy Jòzef Kraszewski, whose works are avidly devoured by masses of unsophisticated readers looking mainly for fast-moving action. Kraszewski, a prolific writer of novels that dramatize various phases of national history beginning with pre-Christian times, provides the reader with a feeling of continuity, with a link between modern Poland and the Poland of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. Other beloved novelists are also unknown in America—for example, Aleksander Glowacki, who writes under the pen name of Boleslaw Prus. In his major novel, *The Pharaoh*, he uses ancient Egypt as the setting for a metaphorical study of the state—its structure and its internal power struggles. In many ways this novel is unique in world literature; it is a pity that there is but an obsolete and forgotten English translation entitled *The Pharaoh and the Priest* (1902). Another of Prus's novels, *The Doll*, depicts Warsaw during the 1870's; many consider it the best of Polish realistic fiction. Although *The Doll* has been translated into several languages,[1] it has not yet appeared in English—perhaps such an exotic subject has discouraged American and English publishers. Two Polish prose writers have won the Nobel prize: Henryk Sienkiewicz in 1905 and Wladyslaw Reymont in 1924. Sienkiewicz, who wrote *Quo Vadis* (which certainly cannot be rated as great literature), is primarily a skillful reconstructor of the seventeenth-century language preserved in Polish memoirs; the peculiar charm of his yarns fades in translation. Reymont's epic of village life, *The Peasants*,[2] occupies a more modest place in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mind of the Polish public than the works of Reymont's contemporary, Stefan Zeromski, who was, for a few generations of progressive intelligentsia, a true model of "commitment." Zeromski's major novel, *Ashes* (1904),[3] deals with Poland's struggle on the side of Bonaparte throughout all the *desastres de la guerra*—a theme of crucial significance to the Poles.

If the public turns, thus, to old-fashioned fiction, it is because in Poland, as everywhere else, an objective narrative with the author acting as an omniscient, detached observer has been disintegrating. In spite of many works of fiction that continue the nineteenth-century method, perhaps the last representative of an ordered, "mirror-of-life" type of prose was Maria Dabrowska. Until her death in 1965, she was recognized by the Polish literary community as a leading moral authority. Dabrowska's main contribution to fiction was her *Nights and Days* (1932-1934), a *roman fleuve* written more or less at the same time that Roger Martin du Gard was working on his *Les Thibault* in France. *Nights and Days* is the story of a family whose internal conflicts and tragedies parallel the changes in Polish mentality from the last decades of the nineteenth century through the years preceding the outbreak of World War I.

During the interwar period, Polish fiction groped for new techniques and felt much less sure of itself than did poetry or the sophisticated literary essay. With the exception of some excellent short stories, such as those of Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz (who exerted, perhaps, greater influence as a poet), the most significant fiction turned its back on "lifelike" characters and realistic situations. The two novels of Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz, *Farewell to Autumn* (1927) and *Insatiation* (1930), exemplify this development. Witkiewicz, a philosopher, a theoretician of art, and a playwright, refused to call the novel an artistic genre. Unlike music, painting, poetry, and drama, the novel for him was simply a catchall for the exposition of an author's personal obsessions and his quarrels with his contemporaries. His novels are a kind of grotesque *opera buffa*. The characters bear fantastic names, eat nonexistent dishes—the names of which Witkiewicz invents with relish—and mix their pansexual interests with long discussions on Husserl or Carnap or their drug experiences.[4] In both works, the action takes place in an indefinite future. They are novels of anticipation which in their somber vision belong to the genre initiated in our century by Zamiatin's *We* and continued by Aldous Huxley and George Orwell. Both novels reveal Witkiewicz's obsession with the modern dragons,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Collectivity (devouring the individual) and Ethics, or happiness for all (devouring metaphysics). In *Farewell to Autumn,* a victorious revolution of the "levelers" destroys relics of a decaying bourgeois society, that is, creators of dissonant music and nonobjective painting; in *Insatiation,* distributors of pills developed by a Mongolian ideologist, Murti-Bing, offer to all those ridden by metaphysical anxiety a means of achieving a feeling of harmony and fullness of existence—a painless preparation for a Chinese-Mongolian invasion of Europe. In the final chapters of *Insatiation,* the commander-in-chief of the unified European army submits to the Chinese before the decisive battle—for he cannot oppose "historical necessity"—and is beheaded with all due ceremony. It is impossible in this short essay to do justice to the complex thought of Witkiewicz, or to his originality which parallels, in some respects, the important undercurrent of historical pessimism in Western European intellectual life during the 1920's.

That well-defined characters, possessing their own essence, were disappearing from fiction can be proved also through an examination of a novel which was published shortly before World War II. In Witold Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke,*[5] the characters are no more than their constantly changing gestures and poses; their behavior is not determined by any "inside" principle but is forced upon them by situations created by others. The hero, a man of thirty, is transformed by a malicious magician into an adolescent. He is forced to go back to high school, and his double consciousness does not save him from assuming all the idiotic attitudes typical of immature males. In his desperate search for authenticity, Gombrowicz constantly returns to the theme of adolescence. For him, the adolescent, despite his stupidity, still presents a certain hope because of his malleability, while the adult provokes sheer horror, imprisoned as he is by a definite form and by his complete dependence upon social ritual. Since the summer of 1939, when he left for a trip to Latin America only to be caught in Argentina by the outbreak of the war, Gombrowicz has been living abroad; but he is unofficially recognized in Poland, and justly so, as one of the most important prose writers. In his novels published abroad (*Transatlantic, Pornography,* and *Cosmos*), he has continued to develop his existential philosophy. Gombrowicz is fascinated by what he calls the "interhuman church"—a constant game of provocation and response, a kind of "one-up-manship," so that our unattainable true substance eludes all grasp and may be nonexistent. In *Cosmos,* we stand be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fore a terrifying universe very different from that made by the wise Clockmaker of eighteenth-century philosophy. There are no laws and no universal structures—only relationships between things, arbitrarily contrived by our mind. Gombrowicz can perhaps be best understood in the light of a similar exploration going on in Polish poetry, as well as in the novel, long before he started to write. For example, Karol Irzykowski's *Paluba* (1903) attacked the very concept of "the character," discovering along pre-Freudian lines that the hero's consciousness is just a set of masks fabricated by his subconscious in response to external challenges.

The prose of Bruno Schulz was also shaped by the atmosphere of the early decades of our century. Schulz won recognition just before the last war and is now regarded in Western Europe as a figure of great stature. Born in 1892, he was the first to translate Kafka into Polish; but he cannot be called an imitator of the Kafkaesque style. Rather, he represents a parallel groping for self-expression. More inventive in his language than the author of *The Trial,* more poetic, and, in addition, more humorous than solemn, Schulz (who was killed by the Nazis during World War II) transformed his native Jewish town in southern Poland into a phantasmagoria where the most common objects are particles in a magma submitted to the constant movement of matter in a state of budding and exploding, assuming incongruous, bizarre shapes. Whether or not Schulz's tales[6] (*Cinnamon Shops, The Sanitarium Under the Hourglass*) should be called novels is an open question. They are, rather, attempts to build a personal cosmogony based upon the myth-making function of the language.

The last war found Polish prose in a state of flux. There is no necessity to remind anyone of the country's fate in the years 1939-1945. In any event, it probably afforded more opportunities for experiencing "limit situations" than did any other area in Europe. Neither traditional forms inherited from realism nor a refined satirical investigation accessible only to an elite fitted a reality that was reduced to a naked choice between life and death. This is why, immediately after the war, a leading literary critic, Kazimierz Wyka, foresaw an impotence of fiction. Anything invented by fiction would be pale compared with what every reader had seen and touched. He advocated a "borderline" novel, and he was not mistaken. The most poignant images of concentration camps, guerrilla warfare, escapes, and migration came from the pens of writers who barely fictionalized events—balancing on the limit of artistic prose and factual

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

report. The stories of Tadeusz Borowski (a former inmate of Auschwitz and Dachau), published in Poland under the title *Farewell to Mary,* are an example of this technique. Narrated in the first person, they are perhaps the most durable work in world literature on Nazi concentration camps. It is curious to note, however, that Borowski's study of Hemingway, whom he admired and read in the original, enabled him to build up the figure of the narrator as a "tough guy" in contrast to all the passive victims in the camp. Thanks to a self-deprecating identification with his hero, he achieves effects of cruelty uncommon even in books dedicated to that macabre subject.

But where was the novel? The most ambitious attempt to capture postwar actuality was made by Jerzy Andrzejewski, whose literary debut occurred before the war. In *Ashes and Diamonds* (known abroad through translations and Andrzej Wajda's film),[7] he tried to combine a realistic description with a moral parable. The complexities of Poland in 1945 were such that probably few non-Poles can extract all the innuendoes from the novel or the film. At that time there was a guerrilla "Home Army," which had fought against the Nazis but maintained a reprehensible loyalty toward the exile government in London. Confronted in 1945 by arrests and deportations, it went underground, and its members were faced with the choice of remaining loyal to their soldier's oath or erasing the past by committing what was, in their own eyes, an act of betrayal to a cause. This moral problem is the central theme of Andrzejewski's novel. The hero, a young boy from the underground "Home Army," who receives an assignment to kill a local secretary of the Communist Party, is treated with no less sympathy than his Communist antagonist. Since "socialist realism" had not yet been imposed when the novel was published in 1948, this equilibrium was still possible. Andrzejewski's novel, in spite of its strictly Polish theme, deals with crucial conflicts of the twentieth century: How can one choose between an obsolete social system and an obsolete mentality, on the one hand, and a rule of terror, on the other? Obviously, every choice must be a tragic one, for it is a choice between two evils.

Bourgeois intellectuals, who felt that the victory of the Red Army happened in accordance with the "laws of history," sought to resolve their internal conflicts in a prose style that, immediately after the war, was designated "literature of taking account." Nothing is more typical of this literature than *Sedan* by Pawel

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hertz, a half-novel or rather several stories bound together by the person of the main character. The hero, psychoanalyzed in a Viennese clinic before the war and a prisoner in a labor camp in the Urals during the war, returns to Poland after the cessation of hostilities. Later he travels to Paris, where he observes the same self-perpetuating folly he had known in his youth. Disgusted, he goes back to his Communist country, but without nourishing any illusions about Communism. (He thus differs radically from Western admirers of the Revolution.)

Because his main effort in *Lake of Constance* was directed at puncturing all the national clichés and the search for authenticity, Stanislaw Dygat can be called a follower of Gombrowicz. His antiheroic narrator relates a stay in one of the mildest Nazi camps, one for interns who, because of their passports, failed to fit any category of the German bureaucracy. A Pole with French citizenship, the narrator desperately tries to communicate to his inmates of various nationalities the essence of the "Polishness" which engulfs him despite his ambiguous and rather reluctant attitude toward it. Dygat, with his humorous detachment, is no exception among Polish writers of the postwar years. They approach even the most hideous reality with a typically Polish mixture of the jocular and the macabre. The "literature of taking account" was highly sophisticated. It programmatically sought its models in the works of the French ironists of the Enlightenment, and it possessed theoreticians associated with the literary weekly *Kuźnica* (The Forge). For some writers this was a school preparing them to become full-fledged standard-bearers for the Party. This is the case with Kazimierz Brandys, whose auto-ironic *Wooden Horse* was a novel on the bankruptcy of liberal individualism.

The crime of genocide committed by the Nazis upon three million Polish Jews has been one of the traumas marking the literature of postwar Poland. Here the inadequacy of traditional narrative again finds confirmation. Even the most gifted prose writer, Adolf Rudnicki, who dedicated himself almost exclusively to the subject, did not manage to convey the tragedy in the form of a novel. His voluminous work consists of long stories where reportage and memoir mingle with fictional devices. The feeling of responsibility for the Jewish fate and the intelligentsia's "taking account" of itself are closely connected. This question recurs under the pen of Rudnicki in his portraits of those liberals of Jewish origin who, entrenched in their nineteenth-century heritage of lofty ideals, felt

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

protected until the end from sharing the fate of the Jewish masses. The long stories of Rudnicki[8] or of Arthur Sandauer (*Death of a Liberal*) may, incidentally, answer some questions posed by Hannah Arendt about the behavior of the Jewish elders in the ghettos.

In 1949 the Party imposed the doctrine of socialist realism, making it obligatory for all writers. In terms of the novel form, socialist realism was both an attempt to go back to the nineteenth century and an enforcement of a goal prescribed from above. The themes allowed in 1945-1949 were either looked at askance or forbidden. The only models that were approved by the Party were the Soviet novels of the late 1930's and 1940's. Published in large editions, Polish socialist realist novels at first provided the officials with confidence as to the influence of literature upon the masses. In fact, they were bought under compulsion by a network of libraries, where they gathered dust on the shelves and were known as "bricks." The almost total failure of socialist realism in Poland (only one prose writer of value, Igor Neverly, succeeded in maintaining his standards within its framework) led in 1955-1956 to the outburst of tendencies far removed from that stifling trend. This time a new "taking account" occurred. The literature of the years immediately following October 1956 reminds one of Pandora's box: Once the lid was raised, repressed hatreds, despair, and complete disillusionment with the tenets of the Stalinist (and often Marxist) creed were liberated. For a few years Jerzy Andrzejewski was a zealous orthodox writer with meager artistic results. Yet, in the short story "The Golden Fox," he was one of the first to denounce the inner emptiness of the so-called "new man." He left the Party and resumed his meditations of a moralist (which had been interrupted by his somewhat strange role in the time of terror). His novels, translated since into English, probe the intricacies of moral decisions that lead man to embrace the most ugly causes. Thus, in *Darkness Covers the Earth*,[9] he depicts a nearly amorous relationship between the Spanish Inquisitor, Torquemada, and a young monk, Diego. Understandably, Dostoevski has been avidly read in Poland, and Andrzejewski's novel is related to the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," though re-interpreted in the light of the author's own experience. The novel is typically Polish because it turns toward a philosophical parable where settings of remote epochs and countries are but a frame that permits the author to step back and examine his own time. Andrzejewski's *Gates of Paradise*,[10] written in a free-flowing, stream-of-consciousness style (no chapters and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no punctuation except commas), takes place in medieval France, and has the making of an excellent film scenario. At the time of the Children's Crusade, a group of adolescents, motivated chiefly by their mutual friendships and loves, join the movement; the individual's libido thus appears to be a primary motor of social upheavals. In 1963, after a prolonged stay in Paris, Andrzejewski published *He Commeth Leaping Upon the Mountains,*[11] a novel about an old painter curiously resembling Picasso. It displays the writer's bravado, and parodies the styles used in Western European novels; but it also confesses indirectly a belief in the interdependence of sexual virility and creativity.

While Polish theater audiences after 1956 vibrated to *Hamlet,* who, as a man surrounded by secret police, reminded them of many things, and to *Richard III,* who acquired all the features of modern tyrants, the field was also opened for novelists using historical allusions. Jacek Bocheński's *Divine Julius* presented Julius Caesar as a vain, unscrupulous politician, a master of deceit; Caesar's conflict with his adversaries took on the familiar outlines of the permanent conflict between intellectuals and the bureaucratic establishment.

During the past ten years, translations of Western novels which had been forbidden between 1949 and 1956 have been appearing. Camus, Faulkner, Hemingway, Sartre, Steinbeck, and Salinger (to name only a few) became widely known in Poland, as did the re-edited works of Kafka and new versions of "classics"—for example, Krystyna Tarnowska's translation of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy.* Yet censorship of original works has been growing tighter, especially since 1960. A tug of war between censors and a sophisticated literary milieu characterizes the literary scene of Poland today. This, perhaps, explains to some extent the success of science fiction, particularly that of Stanislaw Lem, who combines his scientific training with a historical and psychological approach to a degree rarely achieved in the West. For instance, Lem's *Solaris* is much more than the adventures of a young astronaut on a remote planet. In its sheer terror, it can match the thrill of reading Edgar Allan Poe for the first time. This is a man's encounter somewhere in the universe with a form of life incomprehensible to him. The ocean covering the surface of the planet Solaris behaves like an immense brain. It registers the inner experience of man and lends his nightmares tangible, three-dimensional form. When flying over the ocean, the hero finds in the compartment of his spaceship a girl in flesh and blood with whom he had been in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

love several years ago on earth and who had committed suicide. In this way, existential analysis, practiced by Polish writers since the end of the war, merged with science fiction.

Yet it is not the novel, but poetry, the philosophical essay, the theater of the absurd, and shorter narratives, usually in the first person, which score the points in the new race toward literature on the borderline of philosophy. An interaction of cinema and fiction further complicates the situation. Many talents find an outlet in both media. From these crisscrossing influences was born one of the most significant novels of the 1960's, Tadeusz Konwicki's *A Contemporary Dreambook.* In his early career Konwicki wrote several novels that toed the Party line; he later revealed himself as a gifted film director. The main character of his novel suffers from the sense that he has committed a crime and has not been punished for it. Since punishment cannot come from the hand of God, he must take it upon himself. At the end of the war the protagonist had fought in a guerrilla unit against the Soviet Army. Afterward, because of his feeling of guilt, he enters the Party. As the reader may guess from a tangle of symbols, the protagonist finds himself guilty again of crimes committed in the name of a political ideal. Finally, in a stagnant provincial town inhabited only by human relics of the past, he attempts suicide. While he is recovering, his past returns in a series of flashbacks intermixed with scenes showing the miserable existence of backward, small-town folk. This would be a powerful novel except that the title conveys its content all too well. It is a nightmare where reality loses its consistency and is transformed into metaphors for the subjectivity of a defeated man, and where love affairs in which all men prove to be sexually impotent evidently have symbolic meaning. One may ask whether this does not weaken the impact of those aspects of the novel that make it akin to such investigations of moral attitudes as attempted in France first by Malraux, then by Camus and others.

The goal of the Communist Party in Poland has always been to encourage works of fiction that would unfold a realistic panorama of social changes brought about by the Party itself. It was too early, immediately after the war, to pursue this goal; the richness of historical experience was such that no writer could have conveyed it in a satisfactory fictional form, especially since censorship pronounced many themes taboo. There was room for a critical appraisal of prewar Poland, and an example of it is Tadeusz Breza's long political novel, *The Walls of Jericho,* which deals with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Warsaw milieu of the extreme, fascist-oriented Right. But the compulsory introduction of the doctrine of socialist realism doomed the political novel to failure. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Party thereby thwarted its own goal. An honest reevaluation of prewar political and social issues became impossible because of the Party's mania for centering attention upon the activities of Communist heroes in all spheres of public life, even in those where they had been conspicuous by their absence. In addition, since the Polish novel had, even before the war, moved away from nineteenth-century techniques, the obligatory revival of these techniques according to the recipe of socialist realism made the new novels sound false to readers; neither characters nor plots seemed plausible. In 1956, the Party renounced its role of directing writers' consciences. The rule of one doctrine was supplanted by a chaos of contradictory opinions on what literature in a socialist country should be. This does not mean that the Party has ceased to favor a certain kind of fiction or that it has been averse to maintaining its standards through controls at the disposal of a monopolistic owner of all the publishing houses in the country. Yet to reduce published novels to those that are concerned directly with building socialism would be equivalent to keeping the printing presses idle. A whole crop of young novelists made their debut after 1956, but, for the most part, they write very subjective prose concerned with relationships between human beings and not with large pictures of society. The passion with which they tear apart the shibboleths of the so-called "bygone era," however, has provoked uneasiness, if not anger, in the Party. One of these writers, Marek Hlasko, had his passport withdrawn while he was on a trip abroad, and became an exile to the relief of officials who had been wringing their hands over his bad influence upon the youth of the country. Hlasko's quick-paced narratives are obviously influenced by American authors, even by those who in America are regarded as phenomena of "mass culture." Apart from his stories, his novel, *Next Stop—Paradise*,[12] which was published only abroad, can be considered a socialist realist novel in reverse. In it, a group of truck drivers who haul lumber over dangerous mountain roads, far from being socialistically minded workers, hate their jobs and try to mitigate their fear of death by heavy drinking; they perish one after the other in crashes caused by faulty machinery. Hlasko, after he found himself abroad, spent some time in Israel, where he was attracted by the large part of the population that still speaks Polish.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His stories and short novels dealing with life in Israel focus, as is usual for him, on the underworld or on the social margin between proletarians and the underworld.

The puritanical standards of the Stalinist era were broken in 1956. Since then Polish prose writers have been competing with each other in frank and brutal descriptions of sexual behavior. A certain morbidity in this respect makes one think of a neo-Manichaean duality, noticeable not only in Poland. Such prose reflects the young generation's way of life. Disillusioned by the unfulfilled promise of the "Polish October" (1956) and by a strict professionalization of politics, this generation has withdrawn into a sphere of friendships, loves, and private careers "between the jaws of the leviathan," as a Polish poet has remarked. Ironic and brilliant representatives of this generation shy away from ideology, which is an old bore to them. Interested as they are in new linguistic theories and anthropology, especially that of the Lévy-Straus brand, they apply to literature a structural analysis. A new type of pressure is created, and this time not from the Party but from the literary café. Consequently, some exponents of socialist realism, such as Kazimierz Brandys,[13] have put on an existentialist cloak. Brandys' somewhat too skillful profundity, though it won him applause in France, is beyond the scope of the present essay since, along with the crumbling of the doctrine, he has dropped the novel form and has been employing only the shorter genres of fiction. In general, the climate does not seem to augur any panorama-like novel. In his voluminous *Glory and Vainglory,* Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz, a senior writer, conducts a multitude of figures through several decades of social change. But the book makes difficult and rather tedious reading, confirming our skepticism about the possibility of returning, let us say, to the art of Courbet in painting or of Tolstoi in writing. The popularity of diaries and memoirs can be explained not only by their content, but also by their search for an authentic "I" of the narrator. Experimentation with a presumed "I" of a witness extends also to historical novels. Teodor Parnicki is quite widely read in spite of or, perhaps, because of his highly exotic themes and style which testify to his taste for the deliberate obscurity of fictional diaries and confessions ascribed to historical personalities. Even before the war, in his *Aetius the Last Roman,* he showed his interest in epochs of chaos and transition—in this case, Rome in the fifth century A.D. Deported to Russia during the war and later a resident of Mexico for many years, he has recently returned to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poland. His huge novel, *The End of the Covenant of Nations,* delves into political intrigues of inextricable complexity in the Hellenistic empire of the second century B.C. in Asia Minor. His *New Fairy Tale* introduces eleventh-century Poland a few decades after its baptism, also treating Kiev, Denmark, Constantinople, and England during this period. His *Only Beatrice* is set in thirteenth-century Poland.

A wealth of material, hardly encompassed by the existing fiction on contemporary themes, awaits Polish writers. Possibly it can be tackled only with completely new tools. Two major subjects can be distinguished. The first is war, but war as approached by those who were children in the years 1939-1945, who have but vague recollections of facts and thus are free to shuffle them while introducing the fantastic and the grotesque. The short novels of Stanislaw Grochowiak, a gifted poet, are an example of this. But even more important is the subject of the Polish village, for Poland until the end of the last war was, in the main, a peasant nation. Many intellectuals who are now teaching, writing, or directing theater productions come from villages where their parents were illiterate or semiliterate. For these young people, memoirs of childhood mean a return to the countryside. But because they are now city-dwellers, they can see the peasant in a double perspective. Moreover, the village itself is changing and differs greatly from what they recall of their early years. If war takes on a somewhat mythical shape in the narratives of some young writers, the same may be said of the village. These writers see folk songs and peasant rituals as an intimate part of themselves, but they look at them with the eye of an anthropologist. One of the most appealing novels of the village, Urszula Koziol's *Stations of Memory,* makes no pretense of going beyond the subjectivity of the main character and verges on a memoir, though it is written in the third person. This novel tells the story of a little girl in a family of village teachers. It conducts the heroine from her first discoveries of the prewar world through the hard war years to her high-school studies in People's Poland. The peculiar warmth and charm of a primitive existence obeying the rhythm of the seasons is conveyed through folk songs heard by the little girl and innumerable names for plants, animals, and peasant's utensils. Although the equivalents of these names can be unearthed in English or French dictionaries, for urban readers they have become dissociated from the tangible objects they represent. If we have mentioned the lack of large fictional panoramas, we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come upon one unexpectedly here—although it is unintentional, at least in appearance; the reader himself pieces together the heroine's sensations and impressions and deciphers in them the fate of a whole community. While the author does not aspire to a sociological treatise, her novel catches the village in a period of transition. In the last chapters, when the heroine is a high-school student, her classmates, the sons and daughters of peasants from her village, are visited by their fur-coated mothers who display permanent waves and lacquered fingernails. Thus, the novel is a kind of dirge for the traditional peasant life destroyed by the Revolution in the name of an urbanized, industrial society.

The difficulty inherent in an outline such as the one presented in this essay consists in shifting prerogatives: that of a literary historian and that of a literary critic. It may happen that as a literary critic I fall victim to my doubts and biases. In spite of certain limitations imposed by the Party, literature in Poland follows its own, though sometimes quite unexpected, paths. It would be risky to foretell the future of Polish fiction, especially because so many question marks surround fiction in world literature. Perhaps the most significant feature of young Polish prose writers is that they are neither enthusiastic supporters of the existing order of things nor rebels. Reality for them is what it is; ideological formulas seem to them a property of the older generation. For the young generation, what exists is both established and lasting. In this respect, they do not differ very much from young writers in Western European countries, which does not mean, of course, that the society with which they are confronted is of the same type.

References

1. There are two versions in German, one in French.
2. Wladyslaw Reymont, *The Peasants* (New York, 1924-25).
3. Stefan Zeromski, *Ashes*, trans. by Helen Stankiewicz Zand (New York, 1928).
4. Witkiewicz took peyote for the first time in Moscow during World War I; his book on his experiments with drugs was published in 1932, several years before similar books were written by Aldous Huxley and Henri Michaux.
5. Witold Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, trans. by Eric Mosbacher (New York, 1961).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

6. Bruno Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles,* trans. by Celina Wieniewska (New York, 1963).
7. Jerzy Andrzejewski, *Ashes and Diamonds,* trans. by D. Y. Welsh (London, 1962).
8. Adolf Rudnicki, *Ascent to Heaven,* trans. by H. C. Stevens (New York, 1951).
9. Jerzy Andrzejewski, *Darkness Covers the Earth,* trans. by Konrad Syrop (New York, 1960).
10. Jerzy Andrzejewski, *The Gates of Paradise,* trans. by James Kirkup (London, 1962).
11. Jerzy Andrzejewski, *He Cometh Leaping Upon the Mountains,* trans. by Celina Wieniewska (London, 1965). The American title: *A Sitter for a Satyr* (New York, 1965).
12. Marek Hlasko, *Next Stop—Paradise,* trans. by Norbert Gutterman (New York, 1960).
13. Karimierz Brandys, *Sons and Comrades,* trans. by D. J. Welsh (New York, 1961).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COSTAS M. PROUSSIS

The Novels of Angelos Terzakis

With the exception of the works of Nikos Kazantzakis and those of one or two other Greek writers, the modern Greek novel is almost unknown in the United States. Yet, some outstanding modern Greek novelists may be favorably compared with the most famous novelists of other countries. In order to understand and appreciate the work of any contemporary Greek novelist, some introductory notes on modern Greek literature, and particularly on the development of the novel, are necessary.

Throughout the nineteenth century, modern Greek literature attempted to find its way and to establish itself by depicting the life and expressing the aspirations of the Greek nation, which was gradually and painfully being liberated. But there were many obstacles to the development of literary and cultural pursuits: for example, the long enslavement of the Greek people, the lack of widespread education, and the poverty of the country. Moreover, the awe with which nineteenth-century Greek writers and poets sometimes viewed the literary glories of the Greek past hindered the creativeness of modern Greek literature, and the glittering achievements and fashions of contemporary European literature very often overwhelmed modern Greek literature to the point of blind imitation. Even the instrument of the literature's expression, the modern Greek language, was a tantalizing problem that vexed the Greek nation in general and modern Greek literature in particular. On the one hand, there was the archaic (*katharevousa*, purist) language which was used in varying degrees according to the erudition of the writer; on the other hand, there was the vernacular (*demotic*), the living, spoken language of the people. The fight over them was long and bitter, but by the end of the nineteenth century the *demotic* was accepted as the language of crea-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tive literature. Since then it has steadily been adopted by other intellectual fields.

These problems did not prove insurmountable for poetry, as can be seen from the works of Solomos and Kalvos, and later Palamas and Kavafis, Sikelianos and Kazantzakis, Seferis and Elytis, to mention only the best known. But, throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century, prose, and particularly the novel, was less fortunate, although occasionally some glimpses of solid and genuinely Greek work appeared. During the last quarter of the century, however, there was a wholesome reaction against the previous sterile admiration of ancient Greek literature and the blind imitation of foreign literature. First, the studies of Greek folklore by Nicolaos Politis and, later, the language revolution initiated by Psycharis marked a turning point in the understanding of the real "Greekness" of modern Greek people. In a way it brought to them self-knowledge, self-respect, and self-reliance. As a result, the novels and short stories of the late nineteenth century began to use almost exclusively modern Greek themes, taken particularly from life in the country, for Greece had not yet developed a strongly characteristic urban life. But most of the writers of that time were content simply to describe faithfully the simple rural and maritime life of Greece. Thus their works (to which the term *ethographia* was given) are interesting documents describing a given life at a given place and time, but they usually lack vision and are narrow in their outlook. Yet writers like Papadiamantis and Karkavitsas are exceptionally important from many points of view; even today they are considered among the masters of modern Greek prose.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, life in Greece became more urbanized. The social, political, and intellectual milieu grew more complicated and more frequently appeared thematically in literary works. Of course, contemporary foreign influences continued to be clearly evident in the period's literature. Contemporary political, social, and philosophical trends (such as socialism and Freudianism) also made their appearance in Greek literature, but they were still undigested. As a result, there was a great deal of propaganda and didacticism in many novels and short stories of the first three decades of the twentieth century, although some of the writers turned to symbolism, fantasy, or escapism. The short stories and novels of that period, however, remained basically "ethographic."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Modern Greek literature was really reborn around 1930. While the prose writers and poets of that period continued to have their roots in the Greek literary soil, they also seemed to be nourished by the strong contemporary intellectual and artistic currents of Europe and to breathe in a more universal literary atmosphere. Of course, there has always been a considerable European influence on modern Greek literature, even to the point of open imitation, as mentioned above, but the Greek writers of the thirties were not mere imitators. Broadly educated, deeply grounded in the Greek tradition, and experienced in the demanding problems of contemporary Greek reality, these young writers opened new roads for Greek literature in both form and substance. They are Greeks, but their work can speak to and be appreciated by other people as well. On the one hand, they boldly broke with the narrow, local tradition of modern Greek literature—particularly with its provincial *ethographia*—and created something new, wider in range and scope, and valuable in form and substance. On the other hand, what they had received from the outside, they re-created, adopting it and adapting it, incorporating it organically, almost indiscernibly, into their own work, which was actually a new, realistic orientation in the postwar crisis of the Greek world.

After World War I, Greece, like all countries, underwent an intellectual, moral, financial, and political upheaval. Values "eternally" true were shaken. But, unlike other countries, Greece was not free from war at the end of World War I. For four more years Greece was at war with Turkey, a conflict that ended with the Greek catastrophe in Asia Minor and the flooding of almost 1,500,000 refugees into the Greek mainland, which could hardly sustain its own population, then a little more than 5,000,000. Greece, already plagued by military revolts and general political instability, faced new and acute social and financial problems attendant on the influx of refugees.

Naturally, the frustration with current conditions, the lack of a "central core of ideals on which all groups could agree," and the impact of the fast-changing social and political structure shook the area of letters and arts. Thus the literature of the twenties, when it did not docilely follow the established tradition, was pessimistic (especially in poetry, the best example being the work of Karyotakis), or individualistic and escapist, or even indicative of an attempt to express the new social doctrines. But, in the late twenties and early thirties, a new generation of writers reacted strongly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

against the docility of the past and the sterile escapism of the present. They also started from their personal, bitter experience, but, instead of escaping or condemning reality, they made the objective world a matter of personal concern. Perhaps they did not find personal salvation or offer concrete solutions to the many problems plaguing Greece. But they were able to see beyond the picturesque provincialism that had dominated earlier literary efforts and portrayed Greek life as a integral part of European, and even universal, life. That was the main task of the novelists. For, although poetry claimed some important new voices (Seferis, Antoniou, and Elytis, among others), and the short story, play, and essay suddenly came alive, the novel became the predominant literary genre of the thirties and the main outlet for expressing the new trends that were shaping the literary climate of the period. Myrivelis, Venezis, Terzakis, Theotokas, Cosmas Politis, Petsalis, and Karagatsis, to name but a few,[1] are dealing in their novels with the problems of contemporary life and with issues that are vital to modern man. Their works reveal perception and seriousness, originality and concreteness, frankness and concern, and, above all, the superior literary qualities that prove them masters of the art of the novel.

War—its actual process, its horrors, and its aftermath for individuals, groups, and the nation—was one of the great themes that fruitfully nurtured some of the creative novelists of the thirties. The works of these novelists are based on their personal experience, but they also reflect the bitter experience of millions of other people in Greece and other nations during World War I. The Greek *couleur locale* in them concretizes the war theme, thus giving the novels verisimilitude and certain distinct boundaries. Still, the Greek war novels could, *mutatis mutandis*, be easily understood and appreciated by any people who had experienced the war. These novels are basically against war. They oppose war implicitly by presenting its horrors and condemn it explicitly. The treatment of war in some of these novels also encompasses the problems of the refugees: the struggle of the uprooted to adapt themselves to a new country, or their nostalgic reminiscences of their earlier, peaceful life in their lost and beloved homeland.

Other novelists of the thirties, usually drawing on their personal experience and, consciously or unconsciously, including autobiographical elements, present the contemporary, or somewhat earlier, Greek reality. Some of them, working out a subject in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consecutive volumes from its beginning to its end—like the trilogies of ancient Greek tragedies—give broad pictures of Greek life as it was experienced by successive generations of one or more representative families. Others treat specific aspects of contemporary life such as the problems of the modern Greek family, the acclimatization of foreigners in Greece after World War I, the sexual aspects of the life of extraordinary people, the life of adolescents, the escape into the visionary world of fantasy, the lyrical confession, the biography as fiction. Finally, the novelists of the thirties successfully cultivated the historical novel in its classical form and essence.

One of the best representatives of this restless and creative generation is Angelos Terzakis,[2] a writer of wide range and concrete accomplishments who is both Greek and European in spirit, endeavor, and achievement. Although his novels, plays, short stories, and essays have all enjoyed equal success, only his novels will be discussed here. In his novels Angelos Terzakis examines the uncertain, undirected, and unbalanced aspects of life between the two world wars. He is particularly interested in the social and psychological characteristics of the modern family, its problems and tribulations. In fact, he is a very acute social observer—descriptive, detached, and objective, although always involved in the problems of his day. But, instead of attempting to present the whole of society and its problems, Terzakis, especially in his early novels, centers his interest on one family or a few characteristic individuals who, unable to cope with their anguish, are doomed to failure—stricken by their personal "fate" no less than by the circumstances around them. His heroes are, as one critic wrote, "characteristic specimens of their times, condensing in themselves all the transiency, fluidity, and contradiction of the external world, that itself goes on blindly, without orientation, without justification, sometimes without any hope."[3] The wider social and political setting of his time looms only dimly in the background, while he relentlessly illuminates and emphasizes the narrow, but representative, society of a family. Thus Terzakis is able to delineate the misery and anxiety of his time much more clearly by concentrating on the microcosm of a family or of a group of persons than he could have by generalizing about the macrocosm of society. He is earnestly concerned with presenting specific problems rather than with trying to solve these problems by preaching in pious or angry generalities. And, because he is exceptionally adept at revealing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the souls of his characters, uncovering their dark sides and unearthing their hidden indecision, despair, and failure, he is unusually successful in accomplishing his purpose.

This is evident even in his first novel, *Captives* (two volumes, 1932), a large, composite picture of a lower-middle-class Athenian family during the twenties. It is the sad story of Fotos Galanis, his sister Maria, and their sickly mother, who, impoverished after the death of their father, are forced to live in miserable circumstances and almost in seclusion. They fail in all their endeavors to improve their life, become depressed and despondent, and silently, through lack of mutual understanding, nearly turn against each other, although they love one another deeply and sincerely. Eventually Fotos becomes the unwitting cause of his mother's sudden death and the conscious killer of the girl he loves.

The technical structure of Terzakis' first novel is not exemplary, although the over-all plot is presented in simple, clear lines. Sometimes the chapters and subchapters of *Captives* are not well integrated, and the action in the first volume proceeds slowly and asthmatically. But Terzakis' power of analysis and characterization is evident as is his ability to create the proper atmosphere through covert symbolistic realism and to depict the depressing conditions of the period.

In *Captives,* Terzakis presents ordinary people in their everyday life, which, for them, is an oppressive adventure in continuous failure and despair. Fotos Galanis, a weak and unstable person, is suspicious of everything and everybody, morose and ineffectual, afraid of expressing himself openly, and even more afraid of acting according to his beliefs and desires. Yet his real self, his inner self, is capable of affection and compassionate deeds. Being sickly like his mother, he is the prey of his family's solicitous and exasperating care. Both figuratively and actually he is his family's captive. The family often tries to destroy his initiative and eventually reduces him to complete dependence. At times he revolts, silently or openly, against this burdensome care and imposed captivity. But he soon repents and hurries to make amends by conforming even more strictly to his "fate" of despair and servile obedience. And, because he fully understands his degradation, he succumbs to ever deeper despondency, defeatism, and disappointment. He has no illusions about his inadequacies and hopelessness; this self-knowledge is his most bitter reality.

Maria, his sister, is a gentle, thoughtful girl, prepared to serve

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her home and, with her common sense and energy, to buoy up the spirits of her mother and brother. She has clear ideas and strong beliefs that she is willing to express and follow. Without compromising her principles, she demonstrates by her example the way, if not to salvation, at least to the reconciliation of conscience with reality. Maria, surrounded by unstable and mutually suspicious characters, is the only balanced and trusted person in the novel. She is loving and lovable, a dreamer, but also practical and efficient. Her tenderness is not weakness, though it betrays her soft womanly substance; her power is not masculine, but the result of clear, balanced thinking and steady, lofty principles. Her confinement and other misfortunes at times make her nervous and irritable, stubborn and brooding; but soon she is sweet and compassionate again, ready for sacrifices, understanding, and leadership. Maria Galanis might be considered a redeeming conscience in a world of frustration, disenchantment, and resentment.

The mother, always sick and secluded, is preoccupied with a falsely glorified past and her narrow, unfulfilled ambitions. She accepts her misery with pretended dignity. But in her meek, motherly way, she governs her children's lives, silently but effectively restricting their desires and actions.

Many other persons revolve around the three main characters in *Captives*. Sometimes they comment upon the life of the Galanis family much as the chorus of an ancient Greek tragedy. But more often they appear as conscious or unconscious causes of the events that befall the family, as instruments of a dire fate that gradually and inevitably engulfs its victims. One may particularly note Kalotyhis, the sympathetic friend of Fotos, kindly, unlucky, and subdued, clumsy but heart-warming; Sarmides, the corrupt and discredited officer of the army, arrogant and lusty, impudent and fiendish; and Eva, the young girl of bewitching beauty, a kind of *femme fatale,* perhaps more fatal to herself than to the men pursuing her.

In writing *Captives,* Terzakis attained his basic intention, which was, according to one critic: "To express the decomposition of Greece's old patriarchal small-bourgeoisie that did not succeed in entering into the rhythm of the times and was dissolved, heavily wounded in its moral and financial life."[4]

After this impressive beginning, Terzakis consolidated his leading position among the Greek novelists of his generation with his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

second novel, *The Decline of Skleroi* (1933). It is the tragic story of the strange Skleros family, which consists of a mother and two sons who vainly strive to run away from self-destruction. The father, deceased many years earlier, had been a wealthy, aristocratic playboy in his time, who in his middle-age had married a rather rich girl of lower class, but had continued his dissolute life until his death, never caring about his family. The mother, a taciturn but ambitious and domineering woman, pietistic and superstitious, thinking that she alone embodies the "high and correct spirit" of the Skleros family, tries, unsuccessfully, to restore its past glory by instilling its aristocratic elements in her two sons. Her love goes to Andreas, the older son, and she subdues and almost despises Stefanos, the younger son, whom she keeps secluded in a room in their mansion. However, both sons revolt against their mother—Andreas openly and wildly, Stefanos meekly and in isolation. They are well aware of the profligate life of their dead father and are repulsed by it; however, they also sense that they cannot escape his eroding character, which still lives in them and governs their instincts. A specter of doom hovers over them relentlessly.

Andreas, a powerful but strange personality, moody and impulsive, spends his life aimlessly, first in the unfortunate Greek-Turkish War, and later in Europe. Haunted by a sense of guilt for his father's sins, he returns to Athens even more bitter and grim, erratic in behavior and self-consuming. The secluded Stefanos, wanting to assert his manhood, frees himself and elopes with a middle-aged woman. His mother, ashamed of the "scandal" and eager to preserve the "honor" and prestige of her family, proclaims him legally insane. Andreas, indifferent to all and submerged in his own moral agony and chaotic state of mind, at first does not pay any attention to Stefanos' affair; but, at the repeated requests of his brother, he visits him at his hiding place. There Stefanos, sarcastic, offensive, and self-humiliating, provokes his brother and insults him, calling him as rotten as himself, and as doomed and useless. In a moment of self-recognition and self-contempt, Andreas kills his brother, almost believing that he has killed himself, his inner, rotten self. Their mother, a respectable member of society, goes to the police and charges Andreas with the murder of her younger son. The decline of the Skleros family finally reaches its lowest point.

Plot is not the important element in *The Decline of Skleroi.* The events are few and serve only to underline the decomposition of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

soul, the disintegration of ego. Conflict is expressed not so much in deeds as in grudging behavior and repugnant disposition. And, as all the characters are wracked by their self-made woes, their self-respect and self-reliance disintegrate; they almost gloat over their self-destruction. For them salvation is their mutual annihilation.

From the technical point of view, the composition of this novel is flawless; its structure, solid; and its analysis and characterization, penetrating. Its depressing theme is presented in a clear, well-balanced, nearly captivating narration, which is filled with keen observations, profound thoughts, and poetical touches. The charming, though ominous, chapter on love, fittingly entitled "Symposium," is an interlude of lyrical realism and painful insight.

Angelos Terzakis analyzes the souls of his characters mercilessly, revealing their conscious and subconscious thoughts and feelings, and especially the uncontrolled hatred that corrodes their inner selves much more than those whom they hate. "Every man is an abyss, and you get dizzy looking into it," George Buechner once said. When that abyss is full of hellish flames and demonic afflictions such as those haunting the souls of the Skleroi, the dizziness becomes unbearable. Andreas Skleros is especially caught up in the degradation of his time and his family. He frequently abandons himself, in a stream-of-consciousness way, to piercing self-analysis; what he finds, or imagines he finds, within himself is horrendous. As he ponders over the world around him, he finds only the putrid and the repulsive. The child of his degenerate time and the wretched progeny of a perverted family that quickly deteriorates into moral and physiological decay, he inevitably heads for destruction, death, and annihilation. There are moments, however, when he is gentle and decent, when he longs for love and understanding, and is ready to reciprocate. But the evil circle into which he is drawn is too powerful to be overcome by short-lived sentimentalities. Andreas is a tragic, tormented conscience of inherited and acquired abominations.

In his third novel, *The Violet City* (1937), Terzakis again deals with family relations during the interwar period. Although he attempts to put his new story and its ordinary, unassuming characters in a brighter, somewhat more joyous light, he still cannot entirely escape the nightmare of the oppressive reality that weighs heavily upon them. The misery of lower-middle-class people, the drudgery of their everyday life, and the shallowness of their inner life do not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

create an appropriate climate for an affirmation and appreciation of life, much less for true salvation. Most of the characters of the novel are good but weak and ineffectual people, inclined to compromise their values and to be subservient; a few are arrogant souls, destined to blind calamity. Some let themselves become instruments for the desires of others, fully aware of their inferior position; although they maintain an air of painful indifference, they often display dignity in their degradation. It is as if they say: "What is the use of pretending to be a hero? . . . It is so destined for us by fate." But this fate is of their own making as much as a result of circumstances. They are defeated even before they start—and they realize this. They cannot react effectively because their reactions are spasmodic, unmethodical, and desperate. Their efforts to escape the iron cage that they have built around themselves are doomed to failure.

There is another element, however, in this novel: the lurking presence of the growing city of Athens, the violet city. Yesterday it was still a large village; today it is suddenly a huge metropolis, a cosmopolitan center of powerful and dangerous enticement. This new city looms in the background, dynamic and menacing, a symbol of the ever-changing reality that affects people in different and not always beneficial ways. For instance, one of the main characters of *The Violet City,* the naïve old lawyer Meletis Malvis, averred that the growing city of Athens was a witch who lured her victims to destruction. He had devoted his life to establishing a profession and raising a family. For decades he had remained almost fossilized, unaware of the multiple changes around him. Only when disaster struck him did he discover that the friendly small city of yesterday had been transformed into a vast, inimical space of unknown dangers. And, being simple-minded, he blamed the city for his predicaments.

The main story of *The Violet City* revolves around the Malvis family. Malvis had married a very beautiful, haughty girl who, yearning for the "great expensive life," eventually runs away with her wealthy lover. Malvis, deserted by his wife, strives to bring up their two children. The daughter is a sweet, plain girl, sensitive and sensible. But the son, Orestes, is arrogant and conceited. He constantly alienates and humiliates his father by his disrespectful behavior and excessive demands. Meletis Malvis patiently bears the humiliation, secretly hoping that one day he might win his son's confidence and esteem, if not his love, and bequeath him his law

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

office. But when Orestes receives his law degree, he runs away from home to join his mother, who has just returned to Athens after many years of silence. Meletis, wrecked for a second time, tries in vain to win back his son. Sick and heartbroken, he withers away in pain and despair. On his deathbed, however, he has the meager satisfaction of seeing his faithful and loving daughter united with a young man who has recently become his assistant at the office. At least a pretense of family might live on.

The subplots of the novel accentuate the poignancy of the central story. The people around the main characters live their own drama, in sympathy or malice, in active participation or passive indifference. They are common people themselves, sharing as onlookers or participants the painful experiences of the Malvis family, which in one way or another mirror their own static life. Meletis Malvis desperately struggles to maintain a cheerful appearance before the searching eyes of malevolent or kind neighbors and acquaintances. But the silent drama of alienation of feelings and of the open hostility of his wife and son unfolds, heightening the futility of any endeavor for an agreeable and viable settlement.

Angelos Terzakis became a master of the art of the novel with *The Violet City*. The design, composition, and narrative craftsmanship of this novel are exemplary. The style, always lucid and plain when presenting present reality, becomes delicate, almost poetic at times, particularly in certain sensitive, suggestive scenes. The realistic symbolism that strongly permeates the atmosphere of his two earlier novels is much less intense in *The Violet City*. It recurs only intermittently in gentle tones of serene imagery.

Terzakis' first three novels are important landmarks in his literary career and a positive contribution to the modern Greek novel. From the very beginning, his genuine ability in creative narration, his compassionate understanding of the plight of his fellow man, his searching mind, his sincerity of purpose, and frankness of expression marked the seriousness of his endeavor. His constant efforts to eliminate the unessential and to concentrate on structure and characterization soon enabled him to master the technical discipline of the novel form. These efforts gave him confidence and impetus to explore new paths. His sensitivity to and awareness of the agonizing problems of his time—especially those affecting individuals in family groups—make his novels a mirror of his time and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the voice of an almost ignored and deserted segment of the people after World War I. Common people, striving to assert themselves despite hostile and depressing conditions, roam vividly and colorfully through his novels. Contradictory and unstable characters accentuate the futility and frustration deeply felt by man during those uncertain and shaky years. Finally, the family constitutes the nucleus of his work. His main concern is to observe and analyze family problems in a rapidly changing society.

Terzakis' first three novels portray a segment of life in his time. This portrayal is certainly accurate and powerful, but of limited horizons. Thus Terzakis, at this high point in his career, seemed, according to certain of his critics, to be compressed between the agony of his time and the narrowness of his themes. But those who were eager to downgrade him did not take into account his perceptive mind, his power of renewal, and his ability to respond to the urgent needs of his times.

For this reason, in the eyes of his critics, his next step in fiction was, to say the least, unexpected: From his previous tormented viewing of a portion of contemporary miserable life, he plunged into the heroic action of the historical novel, which he also endowed with the burning issues of his day. Certainly, his interest in history had already been displayed in some of his plays,[5] but nothing portended his employment of history on such a large scale in the novel. Yet, he turned to medieval history for his next book, and the result of his endeavor was a vast, historical novel, *Princess Izambeau* (1945). This work proved to be not an attempt, but a great accomplishment, in historical fiction. With its publication Terzakis brought the modern Greek novel to the classical sources of the historical novel. It is an epic in prose, an objective (as far as any novel can remain objective) narrative of past heroic events that border on myth and legend. Thus, diffuse legend is interwoven with historical truth; a sequence of living pictures freely and imaginatively re-creates historically fixed life. Yet the writer of historical novels is not alienated from contemporary life. On the contrary, the good historical novelist projects current issues, problems, and aspirations into the types and forms of the past. Without losing its epic character and conception, a good historical novel speaks for its time and sometimes envisions solutions of current problems. Moreover, the modern historical novel forsakes the serene view of the world usually characteristic of epic poems. The novelist's lyrical tones and his experiential, personal inner world enrich the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

historical novel. Trenchant realism mitigates the romantic element; fanciful legend enhances the realism.

In both subject matter and form *Princess Izambeau* fulfills these prerequisites of a historical, heroic novel. Numerous exciting episodes that sustain and enliven the main action and admirably widen and illuminate the period's setting enrich the novel's fine, interesting plot. Its structure is solid, well planned, and perfectly executed. Its people are clearly and vividly depicted in their gradual evolution as full-fledged characters that struggle to hold a constant position despite the fluidity of life. The period and place—the end of the thirteenth century in the Peloponnesus, which is under Frankish occupation—are imaginatively and faithfully depicted.

Terzakis states the central theme in a brief introductory note which he, like the troubadours of old, addresses to the indulgence of his readers:

> I shall narrate to you a very old chronicle, the wondrous adventures of the young gentle-born Nikephoros Sgouros from Anapli: how he fled, a fugitive, from his native land, how he struggled with his fate on land and sea, and how he waged war against a woman. The times that I wish to revive are of long ago; the voices that sang their glory are silent, and not even dust remains from the bones of the people who lived then. But I, a scribe, poor and exiled in this savage era, shall do whatever I can to please you as I give speech to the soundless past. And so, my kind sirs, may your goodness and tolerance forgive my errors that have escaped me and the shortcomings that I understand but did not have the skill to correct.

The general plot is much more complicated than his introduction indicates; the picture he draws is much wider and more comprehensive. A whole world of individuals and groups moves, acts, and lives around Nikephoros Sgouros and his secretly beloved but open enemy, Princess Izambeau. They love, hate, fight, die, revolt, trade, conspire, work, play, cry, laugh, toil, and suffer. They are nobles and commoners, knights and serfs, peasants and seamen, pirates and rebels, heroes and cowards, rich men and paupers, laymen and clergy, men and women. They represent all classes and all professions.

Princess Izambeau offers a vast, lively, and well-balanced picture of the Peloponnesus—indeed of the entire Greek world—during the Middle Ages, when foreign conquerors and intriguers, Franks, Venetians, and others, were trampling the country. The passive and active efforts of the Greek people to shake off the brutal foreign

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

yoke occupy a great portion of the novel. In a sequence of colorful, dramatic scenes, the struggle, particularly of the *rovolatores* (the guerrilla fighters of the time), is vividly displayed. There are also many superb, though horrible, scenes describing the famine and plague that befell the unfortunate people of the Peloponnesus during the Frankish occupation. One may presume that the recent occupation of Greece during World War II (when the novel was completed) gave Terzakis the motivation to write his medieval novel and provided the fresh, firsthand material that he painfully but skillfully incorporated into it. Indeed, *Princess Izambeau* is a responsible act of the author commensurate with the urgent problems of that time in Greece. The tragic and brave experience of the nation and Terzakis in facing the hardships of the occupation and the ensuing liberation is artfully channeled into the remote medieval period, warming it and making it alive and convincing. At times this historical novel not only provides the pleasure of a remote and curious past, full of romantic adventures and myth, but becomes a powerful and meaningful message for contemporary life. It accomplishes that without any adulteration of its artistic essence or degeneration into didacticism. Terzakis is too competent an artist to sermonize, and too human to stray far from life. Just as he is able to keep his reader's interest alive (a noteworthy achievement in a book of 530 densely printed pages), so, too, is he able, without intruding, to keep the reader's mind awake by projecting into past situations those problems and ideas that occupy contemporary man and demand solution. The epic latitude of historical fiction allows him to put some of those issues comfortably into the history of the past. *Princess Izambeau* is one of the truly felicitous examples of modern Greek literature, an unmatched masterpiece of historical fiction, a classic of its kind.[6]

Terzakis' choice for his next novel was perhaps somewhat curious, but not altogether unexpected. His *Voyage with Hesperus* (1946), an exquisite novel about the life, thoughts, and experiences of young people, is one of the best examples of a new trend then introduced by some of the leading writers of the thirties: the novel of adolescence, especially as reminiscences or objective observation and reflection. Some critics labeled the novelists' preoccupation with and turning to reminiscences, the reminiscences of childhood and adolescence in particular, as an attempt to escape from the harshness of contemporary life. Perhaps this is true, but "escape"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was not the only reason. Much more significant was the desire of these novelists to apply their creative powers to a field of life that had previously been used only occasionally in modern Greek literature. They sought to present adolescence in a poetical atmosphere in which dream and reality become inseparable. Critics have also suggested that Alain Fournier's *Le Grande Méaulnes* (which appeared in 1913 and was translated into English as *The Wanderer* in 1928) exerted considerable influence upon the Greek novelists. Again, this might be so. But each of the Greek novelists used his material very differently than Fournier had, and they eventually produced some of the best novels of modern Greek literature, poetical in substance and far-reaching in disposition. For example, Cosmas Polites' *Eroica* is an epic poem of adolescence; Elias Venezis' *Aeolia* is a nostalgic poem of youth longing for a lost country; and Terzakis' *Voyage with Hesperus* is "an anguished metaphysical poem"[7] of youth. It shows, among other things, the first baptism of adolescents into philosophical thinking through exposure to the harsh questions of life, love, and passion.

Time and circumstances limit the main action of the narrative in *Voyage with Hesperus*. But the novel's esoteric projection, its dreamy world of thought and feeling, and its dynamic symbolism transcend the events described. Glafcos, a sensitive and pensive youth, goes to a lonely country place for his summer vacation. There he lives as close to nature as he can, devotes a great deal of time to contemplation and dreaming, and cautiously makes some acquaintances of his own age. Through them he meets a strange, secluded family and becomes particularly attached to Danae, their oldest daughter, who is a very beautiful and self-assertive young girl. Glafcos and Danae are both strong personalities, intellectually and emotionally combative, and impetuous, but, when necessary, coolheaded and coldhearted. They fall in love, meet secretly under strange and dangerous conditions, and consummate their love in a wave of dreamy passion and unruffled consciousness, in bitter pain and celestial sublimation. With the end of Glafcos' vacation, their magic voyage with the evening star ends on a gloomy note of unfulfillment and bitter-sweet experience.

In *Voyage with Hesperus* Terzakis respects his youthful heroes, their life and thought. He does not handle them condescendingly as mere children, but as distinct human beings. All of them have their own clearly defined personalities, although they do not lose the fluidity of their formative adolescent years. Their thinking, es-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pecially that of Glafcos and his anonymous male friend, may appear much more mature than what is usually considered appropriate for their age, but it is presented with enough particulars that one cannot doubt its credibility. In any case, if we, the elders, transfer ourselves to that golden period, we will find that we had (or believed that we had) such or similar thoughts in our youth. Danae, Glafcos, and his anonymous friend in Athens with whom he corresponds fight both separately and together, and with rare seriousness and intensity, to formulate in words and deeds their ideals of life. They are searching and contesting their views. They experiment with them, innocently and gracefully, painfully and ruthlessly. With each turn, their life and thoughts crystallize, and the mystery of their exuberant existence becomes more acute. For instance, did the anonymous friend of Glafcos really live the life that he claimed to live, or was it only a figment of his feverish imagination? Was Danae really the friend's first fatal love or was it only after he became aware of Glafcos' love for her that he seized the opportunity to take her away from Glafcos, to make him "unwilling to live," as he cynically wrote and told him? Was he really a great expert on life, or was he simply living in a world of fantasy and illusion? The reader may fashion the peculiar, anonymous boy at his discretion, projecting him or shrinking him. This is the charm and poetry of this character. He substituted, perhaps, the dream of a fantastically rich experience and the seeming strength of an excessively solid and bold intellect for the bitterness of his reduced and miserable personal life.

The secondary characters, young and old alike, are also convincingly painted. Their lives and personalities harmoniously entwine with the explosive course of the young heroes' lives: Aunt Suzanne, with her affected aristocratic and cosmopolitan manners, her austere outlook and limited horizons; the Pitsilas couple, the mother, a naïve *nouveau-riche* peasant who vainly tries to imitate the delicate manners of the upper class, and her husband, a physician who confined himself in the province and falsified his life as well as his medical science; their children, accessories to the strong will of Glafcos; the long-suffering colonel who, petrified by his resentment against the outside world, lives a secluded, bitter life and nearly drags his children down with him, although his affection for them is great, sincere, and protective; the charming grandmother who has known and experienced a great deal but even now is alert and cheerful; and, finally, the death-stricken old Pigi, who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bears her grief stoically and treats the others with understanding, devotion, and kindness—a simple woman whose intuition is uncanny and whose heart is expansive. All of them, through their deeds and posture, affect the development of the psychological attitudes of the young characters and offer something, positive or negative, to their molding.

Vincent Starrett once wrote: "When some of the best writers in the world remember their childhood with, as it were, the eyes of youth, the result is invariably some of the world's best literature." In some ways, Terzakis' *Voyage with Hesperus* belongs in this category.

Without God (1951) is, in substance and character, very much akin to the first three novels written by Terzakis, but it is broader in scope and vision, covering unusually diverse groups and dealing with problems of general interest for the period. Again, it is a vivid, composite picture of the troubled years between the two world wars. But it concentrates on the disappointments and disillusionments of the young generation in particular, their lack of faith, and their vain search for something to believe in and to pursue.

The hero of *Without God,* Michael Paradisis, has a gentle and liberal interest in the amelioration of society, a loving heart, and a probing mind ready to analyze, criticize, and revolt against established ideas, conditions, and men. He is easily pulled into the hasty and hazy revolutionary streams of the twenties. At first Paradisis is fertile soil for the Communistic slogans of liberty and justice. He zealously tries to disseminate and apply them. His critical mind, however, is not fully satisfied; his penchant for independent thought makes him suspicious of and suspected by professional revolutionaries—a situation that is very painful for him. His moral and intellectual integrity is deeply hurt. This disappointment and his timidity and restraint in a love affair make him flee Athens. He moves to the country where he establishes a rather prosperous farm and lives peacefully for some years. But, when his brother dies, Paradisis feels morally obliged to return to Athens to become the guardian of his brother's two children. In Athens he devotes himself totally and unselfishly to their welfare and proper upbringing. But, just as all the efforts of the interwar period failed to find a faith, failed to create a lasting peace, all Paradisis' efforts to form these two young individuals into ideal, or even ordinary,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

human beings fail tragically. Paradisis, the unfortunate dreamer of happiness and dignity, falls under the vicious attack of one of the children the very day of the outbreak of World War II.

Without God vividly presents the social, political, and financial instability, the moral corrosion, and the intellectual agony of the generation of the twenties and thirties: a lost generation, angry and unforgiving, a generation without God—not only without the God of Christians, but without any god, any belief. As Robert Kiely once observed, the characters in some contemporary novels "cannot forgive their own weaknesses and therefore cannot conceive of a God who would. . . . Surrounded by beasts of prey and cast in roles they are unfit for, these men turn inward and seek in the mind an order and safety the natural universe seems not to provide."[8] But even those who professed belief in some current ideology soon became halfhearted in their enthusiasm for this ideology and felt misguided. The spiritual vacuum was terrible. In that disintegrating atmosphere, some people hunted chimeras, others fell into despair, and still others meekly conformed to the drudgery of a mediocre life. But all awoke one day to discover that they were living under an illusion. When the illusion vanished, it was too late for them to avoid failure.

Discontented yet active dreamers, repulsive opportunists, chaste and proud souls, greedy and lewd characters, sound, broad-minded but ineffectual men, indifferent and inactive fatalists, and the multicolored, vivacious, unpredictable masses all move and live naturally in this great picture of Greek life—indeed of life everywhere—during the years between the wars. Yet the reader understands that, as Kavafis said, "there is no ship for you, there is no road" for salvation. War is inevitable, but is it the proper solution?

In *Without God,* as in all his works, Terzakis depicts his characters with clarity and precision. He builds them gradually—often using the techniques of flashback and self-analysis—through their thoughts and deeds, in the process of life, in their dramatic conflicts with each other. They are neither black nor white; each of them is a subtle combination of contrasting ingredients. Terzakis is a master in revealing the different hues and elements that comprise the actual character of a person. He does not merely describe the surface of life, but dissects life with compassion and perception, and re-creates it with feeling, imagination, and insight. Perhaps this is the reason Terzakis felt the agony of his time so acutely, was so fascinated or, as certain of his critics maintain, so obsessed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by it that he was compelled to depict it with such urgency in most of his works. Be that as it may, Terzakis is really the voice of his time: anguished, yes, but clear, provocative, and truthful.

A side issue in *Without God* is the total sacrifice of oneself in helping and protecting others. A poignant variation of this issue constituted the main theme of an earlier work by Terzakis, his powerful novella, *Affection* (1944), in which he examines in depth the moral issue of disinterested devotion and unselfish self-sacrifice. He did not attempt to solve it or to provide answers. He was primarily interested in presenting in sharp relief the psychological aspects of the problem as it is experienced by true-to-life characters.

In the six novels examined above, Terzakis generally follows the rules of the conventional "classical" novel, in both form and subject matter. He soon mastered those rules; thus he was able to create novels that are faithful to the genre but that also have his personal seal distinctly imprinted upon them. His first three novels are undoubtedly concrete achievements for the modern Greek novel. The next three, *Voyage with Hesperus, Without God,* and the incomparable *Princess Izambeau,* are mature works that transcend national boundaries and place Terzakis among the world's leading contemporary novelists. But Terzakis, the alert, observing, and daring writer that he is, does not acquiesce in his success. Always ready to try something new, he constantly strives to improve his art.

This is especially evident in his latest novel, *Mystic Life* (1957), which, from a technical point of view, is a different type of novel both in form and subject matter. At first glance, *Mystic Life* seems to lack a discernible plot, an over-all myth, or a conceived design. But the author planned it that way. This intentional departure from the established order, from the norms of orthodox form and composition in the novel, proved successful, as were similar attempts by other modern novelists elsewhere. *Mystic Life* is an exceptionally powerful work of free narration, an uninhibted creation of subjective and objective reality presented in depth and with insight. It is revolutionary in structure and contemporary in substance. In its seemingly disjointed form, it tries to mirror the fragmentation of modern man's conscience.

The story of *Mystic Life,* the hero's unfinished manuscript which was written at irregular intervals of time, is narrated in the first-person singular. Past and present events, thoughts, and feel-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ings are intermixed and interwoven in a painful and charming fabric of scattered dreams and shattered realities. The anonymous hero frequently expresses himself in a stream-of-consciousness style, reveals the depths of his soul, and in an unorderly but psychologically natural fashion relates whatever comes from his conscious and subconscious world: real impressions from his early or present life as well as mere figments of his imagination. He constantly pries into his own self and into the general mystery of human behavior. Faced with inconsistencies and contradictions, he seeks ultimate answers to the phenomenon of life. As one critic has said in reference to other contemporary novels: "Instead of living for the immediacy of the moment or living with the concreteness of the real thing, he looks for comfort in ultimates and abstractions."[9] Sometimes he willfully abandons himself to the rudeness of actualities, but more often he retreats into painful self-examination and the poetical world of dreams and illusions. His fierce, almost agonizing, search for truth, his inability to communicate his real self to others, and his refusal to accept reality become the tragic and ironic toil of his life. His futile effort to assert his extreme position often turns into self-deprecation and irony, self-disdain and sarcasm, reflecting equally upon himself and upon contemporary society in general.

Yet there is an exceptional person who might meet his high requirements and fulfill his most cherished ideals. She is Vena, an extraordinary woman who can match him in intellectual and psychic capacity, in inner experience, in uncompromising principles and attitudes. She is a tragic, mysterious, almost sacred person, capable of affection but aloof from life—a striking combination of cruel logic and tender feelings. But, as one critic rightly observed:

> The inability to compromise with reality leads to the inability to understand each other. . . . The culmination of the tragedy, is that the hero and heroine of this fiction, who are made for each other, did not succeed in finding their common point of contact, in catching that decisive moment that would lead them to the longed-for union.[10]

But these two exceptional characters are not yearning for ordinary happiness, which they deem an "unbearable" condition, but for expiation and salvation through pain. Thus they finally drift apart and must submit separately to their painful destiny of unfulfilled intentions.

The surrounding characters, with their personal problems and trivial interests, their intense conflicts and conventional ideas, under-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

line the tragedy of Vena and the anonymous hero. The personalities of the other characters are gradually constructed and securely placed in context, although the fluidity and cheapness of their purposes betray their basic insecurity. It is primarily for this latter reason that the hero-narrator, in his vain attempt to comprehend and define the purpose of mankind, directs much of his searing sarcasm at them, although, as mentioned earlier, he does not spare himself. Moreover, through the adventures and misadventures of those ordinary people, and their entanglement with the two heroes, the social and psychological scope of the novel is expanded. Through them *Mystic Life* assumes a kind of concreteness that is not appropriate for the two leading characters. Indeed, the narrator and Vena would have been better suited to an environment beyond this world, a mythical creation of their own. The antagonizing presence of these conventional people forces Vena and the narrator into bitter contact with reality. Thus, the manuscript that started as the narrator's hazy personal confession ("secret self-confession," one is tempted to say) becomes a wide, lively picture of tangible reality as well.

The interchange and interweaving of regressive daydreaming, keen observation of life, psychological insight, and poignant actuality provide *Mystic Life* with a suggestive power that projects it beyond its boundaries as fiction. The author's brilliant, consummate craftsmanship and his skillful, artistic handling of the theme are evident throughout. The style is rich and accurate, lucid and suggestive, poetical and dense; but at times it becomes light and familiar, capturing the matter-of-fact tone of everyday speech.

Terzakis' *Mystic Life* is, in substance and form, a modern novel of the highest rank and merits the attention of a wide and well-informed audience.

K. Th. Demaras, a sober, cautious historian of modern Greek literature, made the following comments about Terzakis' technical achievements in the novel:

In Angelos Terzakis we find the most austere novelistic conscience of modern Greek literature. The will of narration in his work is first, and he excels in it. All the powers of the writer, images, descriptions, dialogues, tend exclusively to the same end: the creation of an atmosphere that justifies and imposes the plot's course. His inventions are wise, his characters are delineated in clarity and probability. His language is not shining, nor his phrase dense. But his works move in a consistent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

world that is tight and compact and attains aesthetic sympathy. His dialogue has realism, ease, and natural articulation.[11]

Another eminent critic and active participant in the regeneration of modern Greek literature since the thirties, Andreas Karandonis, summarized his opinion of Terzakis as follows:

> The work of Angelos Terzakis, based as it is on the solid talent of a builder who knows how to fuse every element into a coherent whole, is a landmark in the development of the modern Greek novel. His extraordinary sensitivity is capable of analyzing itself and of suffering the trials of its heroes. His is the conscience of a deeply cultivated man who feels acutely the problems of his time. And he adds to this a psychological insight equal to the task of anatomizing the suffering, the unsatisfied, the divided humanity which constitutes, in many ways, the spirit of our century.[12]

Indeed, the two main characteristics of Terzakis are his mastery of the art of fiction and his intense and sincere interest in the issues of his time. Sensitive, soulful, compassionate, with a well-organized mind and a rare ability for creative expression, he became the genuine voice of his time, the conscience of his generation. He faced the challenge of his time with understanding and resolution. The wasteland in which humanity existed between the two wars and the psychologically and morally oppressive climate of that period were a reality that Terzakis could not and did not wish to escape. The agony and despondence that dominate much of Terzakis' work were the by-product of those confused years. Although he was constantly attacked by critics for his preoccupation with agony and despondence, Terzakis remained true to his time, understood its problems, and spoke clearly and sincerely, though painfully, about it in his novels. As Dorothy Van Ghent has said, "First, novels have their primary interest in the illumination they cast upon life, not life somewhere else and at another time, but immediately here, immediately now. And second, novels are able to cast illumination upon life only insofar as they are coherent works of art."[13] Terzakis' novels exemplify these simple truths. He does not profess, however, to be a social reformer. Having incorporated into himself the bitter experience of his heroes, he simply records his impressions with penetrating insight, clarity, and authority, and leaves the reader to reflect upon possible answers.

From time to time Terzakis has introduced innovations into his art, but these innovations in subject matter and form were not made for the sake of uniqueness and novelty, or for the purpose of serving

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the precepts of any literary or other "school." For him innovation consists always in an intentional effort to achieve a more accurate understanding and expression of reality. He has always done what he was convinced a dynamic novelist must do to keep pace with his time. In this regard, Terzakis recently commented to me:

> My opinion about the novel is neither conservative nor revolutionary. I think that in *Mystic Life* I have made some evolution in comparison with my earlier works, but I still preserve the persons-characters and a very free, fluid myth. I believe that in the novel the person must have a delineation, be it even fluid—a delineation that differentiates the person from the shadows and the inanimate objects. I admit that in life there are no "characters" with absolute, unbending qualities; I have always propounded the contradictoriness of inner man; but I maintain that man, the individual, is a personality that is a concrete soul, determined by the coordinates of space and time. I believe that the contemporary dissolution of every form in the novel conceals an organic weakness in the purely creative area: Alien elements have invaded the novel—lyrical, theoretical, visionary, metaphysical—and have dissolved it so that they may appropriate it; and of course the spirit of fashion makes for great havoc. The result is that they have driven away the reader of literature, the genuine one, not the snob. The novel must have affability, humaneness; it must come to welcome the good reader, not distress him and repel him.[14]

Furthermore, Terzakis does not belong to any "school," nor has he created one. Of course, he is well acquainted with both old and new schools, but he has not been overwhelmed by any—even though some of his critics have spoken of Hamsun and Dostoevski, Voutiras and Hatzopoulos, and others as influencing him in either subject matter or form.[15] In any case, as Andrew Lytle wrote: "Realism, naturalism, impressionism, existentialism—all those . . . remain signposts, showing the way only towards the discovery of the individual talent, which is there to be read for itself, for its unique contribution, not as evidence of a school."[16] And Terzakis' work is, to paraphrase Lytle, eloquent evidence of his individual talent as a novelist who has made a unique contribution to the modern Greek novel in particular, and to the contemporary novel in general.

Terzakis is an extremely gifted narrator of stories that match the urgency of our times and thus are perfectly adapted to what contemporary life demands of an artist. Again, as Lytle has said, "Anybody with a narrative gift can tell some kind of a story: the successful artist tells the one story the circumstances and actors demand."[17] Angelos Terzakis has, as perhaps no other Greek novelist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of his generation, the power to create a concrete, emotional, or suggestive scene, to dramatize sharp moral and personal conflicts, to reveal the insight and thoughts of his characters in the appropriate environment, to make the ordinary interesting, to employ aesthetic techniques skillfully in order to attract and hold his reader and to force him to live his heroes' experiences in a powerful narrative of sincerity, passion, and reflection.

References

1. The famous modern Greek novelist, Nikos Kazantzakis, is not mentioned among the novelists of the thirties because he does not belong to their generation: First, he was much older than they were, and second, all his novels were written much later, in the years 1946-1957.

2. Angelos Terzakis was born in Nauplion in 1907. Although he studied law at the University of Athens, he has devoted himself to literature since his early years. When he was very young, he published two volumes of short stories and edited two short-lived literary magazines; since 1963, he has been editor of the monthly, *Epochs*. Besides his first two books, he has published two more volumes of short stories, one novella, seven novels, ten plays, one volume of essays, and one historical narrative. He has been regular contributor on literary themes to many magazines and newspapers. His plays were produced with great success by the leading theatrical organizations in Greece, and two of them by university groups in America. Since 1937, he has been in the service of the National Theater of Greece in various capacities, as secretary, director, instructor, and general manager.

3. I. M. Panagiotopoulos, *Persons and Texts*, Vol. II (Athens, 1943; in Greek), p. 124.

4. G. Theotokas, in a review of Terzakis' novel, *Idea*, Vol. I, No. 3 (March, 1933; in Greek), p. 199.

5. Of course, Terzakis' theatrical work cannot be discussed here—useful and enlightening as such a comparative study might be. But there is no doubt that Terzakis the novelist has profited much from the experience of Terzakis the playwright, especially in character delineation, in dialogue, in the dramatic handling of situations, in condensation of issues and scenes, and in creating atmosphere. It may also be added this his accomplishments in the theater equal his achievements in the novel.

6. *Princess Izambeau* has already been translated into Swedish, and is now being translated into Romanian, Russian, and Spanish.

7. A. Karandonis, *Prose-Writers and Prose-Writings of the Generation of the Thirties* (Athens, 1962; in Greek), p. 211.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

8. Robert Kiely, "The Craft of Despondency—The Traditional Novelists," *Dædalus,* Vol. 92 (Spring, 1963), pp. 230-31.

9. Harry Levin, "Apogee and Aftermath of the Novel," *Dædalus, op. cit.,* p. 218.

10. Yiannis Hatzinis, *Preferences* (Athens, 1963; in Greek), pp. 47 f.

11. K. Th. Demaras, *History of Modern Greek Literature,* Vol. II (Athens, 1949; in Greek), p. 201.

12. From "A Critical Mosaic" about Terzakis in *The Charioteer,* Vol. I, No. 4 (1962), p. 54.

13. Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel. Form and Function* (New York, 1961), p. vii.

14. From a letter of Terzakis, May 18, 1966. Terzakis has frequently written essays and critiques on the novel in general, on the modern Greek novel or individual novelists in particular. His early essay, "The Modern Greek Novel," published in consecutive issues of *Idea* (Vol. I, 1933), is still today of basic importance to the serious student of the modern Greek novel.

15. He himself in the letter mentioned above states: "I have always believed in the genuinely great novelists: Walter Scott, Dickens, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, Tolstoi, Dostoevski, Proust. Perhaps Flaubert and Dostoevski have influenced me the most. But I have never imitated. I have always acted according to my opinion—only, you see, that there are organic affinities also."

16. Andrew Lytle, "Impressionism, The Ego, and The First Person," *Dædalus, op. cit.,* p. 281.

17. *Ibid.,* p. 289.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ANTICIPATIONS

ERWIN N. HIEBERT

The Uses and Abuses of Thermodynamics in Religion

THE GREAT bulk of literature on the interaction of science and religion in the Western world over the past century revolved largely about matters related to their warfare and reconciliation. In the majority of works written on this topic since 1850, the biases of the authors were transparent and strong in the defense of either science or religion. Thus, the losses to religion were chalked up on the credit side of science and vice versa. This attitude has prevailed even though many of the most intensely controversial issues seemed to disappear into oblivion without any concessions of permanent damage in either camp.

In earlier times, by contrast, it was commonly believed that an intimate knowledge of natural philosophy could only show the way to a greater reverence for the Deity who had called the cosmos into existence and had sustained it. With such a concept of the presence and action of God in nature, neither warfare nor reconciliation was a matter of vital concern for natural philosophers or theologians.

Within the mechanistic tradition of early modern science, it was considered quite unacceptable to demand that God operate through fitful interventions from a supernatural sphere above and beyond the natural world. The alternative was to emphasize, as the deists did, that the study of nature revealed the wisdom of God in his original design. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, nature was regarded as the most positive foundation for belief in the Deity. It was, in fact, considered a more acceptable foundation than theology, which had caused persecution, war, and hostility since the Reformation.

In more recent times a favorite approach to the problem, viewed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from the side of science, was to concentrate on those historical advances in the natural sciences that contributed most to the erosion of traditional religious institutions, practices, concepts, and beliefs. Frequently the intent was to demonstrate the practical absurdity and logical meaninglessness of specific elements of religious faith. This approach was founded on the assumption that the conflicts between science and religion were largely resolved by the advance of science and the retreat of religion.

A familiar argument proceeded somewhat as follows: Various aspects of nature, including vast domains of animate and inanimate matter, were once thought to belong exclusively to the mysterious and sacred realm of truth which science would never invade. With the maturation of science, modern man acquired factual information and scientific theories by means of which those "mysterious realms of truth" came to be annexed to science in various concrete developments within astronomy, evolution, genetics, meteorology, biochemistry, medicine, pharmacology, and the study of animal behavior.

It was claimed that as long as man's custom to worship God in a prescientific way prevailed, it was unlikely that man would examine the logic and meaning of his worship. As John Morley, the English statesman and man of letters, expressed it: "Where it is a duty to worship the sun it is pretty sure to be a crime to examine the laws of heat." The advancement of science changed these customs. With its unreasonably effective and precise mathematical language, and its concepts about atoms, energy, genes, and cells, science appropriated to itself those realms of truth that had once been taken to be the sole prerogative of religion. No wonder men were left hugging obsolete and empty religious concepts. No wonder the institutionalized rituals appeared sterile.

According to this view, only a dim future could be augured for religion except for those who were too witless to recognize the evidence against it, and for those who were so persistent and ingenious in their mental gymnastics as to succeed in barricading themselves against scientific criticism. Religious systems based on naïve, stopgap excuses for God in nature, the scientists argued, had provided their own built-in doom as science was seen to "take over."

Arguments of this type naturally led to the serious questioning of the values of the traditional religious beliefs and institutions. More detrimental to religion, in the long run, was the attitude of viewing traditional religion not as something to be combated or maligned, but as something irrelevant to man's life in society—some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thing to be by-passed or quietly laid to rest while moving on to other non-supernatural, less other-worldly, more secular tasks and objectives tied to more positive phenomenological evidence of what is and what might be.

Science itself was taken at times to represent a new high mode of religious activity—something akin to Spinoza's intellectual perception of God carried over into the life of the experimental and theoretical scientist. That is, science was seen to represent the search for God's truth—irrespective of the "beliefs" of truth's spokesmen. At this level of discussion, science and religion were no longer in competition with one another as a world view. "Winning out" and "conflict" had lost their meaning in the complete overlap of unitary objectives.

The alternative posture was to *accommodate* one's thought; to accept the mutually exclusive compartmentalization of science and religion by holding to two "complementary pictures" of man's view of the world: the scientific or material picture, and the religious or spiritual picture. Unfortunately the pictures were blurred, and their boundaries ill defined. Thus, no one could predict when and where scientists would raise and answer questions that had been nurtured within the traditional precincts of theology and philosophy. Always a possibility, to be sure, was the substitution of ultimate systems of thought other than those of history and tradition—other religions, that is.

At the opposite end of the problem, from the side of religion, were efforts to reappraise and defend religion, theology, revelation, the church, and the "spiritual" needs of man in society by rejecting, denigrating, devaluating, or reinterpreting and adjusting scientific theories and explanations in ways designed to remove the existing conflicts. The extensive literature devoted to this subject covered the full range of arguments—from shallow discourse, ignorance, intolerance, equivocation, and clever semantics, to analyses and thoughtful encounter characterized by acuity, rationality, finesse, and charm.

The focus invariably fell on the removal, somehow, of irreconcilable dissimilarities and contradictions. The scientific claims of mechanistic cosmology, for example, were taken to be exaggerated; literal Biblical interpretations were seen to be too inflexible. Darwinian evolution was criticized for its endeavor to provide excuses for missing links. The Biblical account of man's genesis was demythologized. The religious significance of Biblical records, his-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

torical accounts, miracles, and textual contradictions was salvaged by reinterpretations that placed the emphasis upon non-literal meanings of the text. By adopting a language that was not literal but symbolic and analogical, theology could secure itself against all the strictures of science. So, too, could it defend itself against the criticisms of logic by claiming that its language was not logical but paradoxical. On the other hand, a knowledge of God that was merely symbolic, analogical, or paradoxical was considered by scientists to be no real knowledge at all.

II

While there are a great many general works that employ a broad historical approach to the interaction of science and religion, there are few that discuss the use to which science has been put in answering questions of a fundamentally religious cast. Yet the influence that thermodynamics, for example, has exerted upon religious thought over the past century testifies to such use. The first and second laws of thermodynamics have been used, affirmed, rejected, manipulated, exploited, and criticized in order both to further and to censure religion.

If the history of science is to be more than an internal analysis of the manner in which science came to be what it is today, or at any other time, the historian of science may have to venture into new territory. This new territory stretches beyond the confines of the traditional study of the major documents that have contributed to the experimental and theoretical progress of science. Indeed, if history is a record of man's ideas and behavior in place and time, then it may be quite as legitimate to study the interaction between thermodynamic thought and religion as it is to study the internal history of thermodynamics *per se*—although the documents for the two kinds of historical study are quite different.

In examining the use of thermodynamic principles in religious (and perhaps pseudo-religious) thought, the literature that is encountered may not always be what, with propriety, may be called first-class. The criterion for considering a given author's treatment of a subject must necessarily be its relevance to history, and not its intrinsic merit as a work of enduring scientific or religious import. This is not to defend the study of *any* crack-pot thermodynamicians, philosophers, or theologians; but, rather, to suggest the pertinence to this historical study of literary works, crack-pot or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not, provided they exerted some noteworthy effect upon society. The works, in other words, must mirror something of the feelings and the attitudes of the age, irrespective of whether they would have stood the test of excellence in the eyes of the elite in science or religion. The essential substance of this phase of the history of thermodynamics or religion is, therefore, not what happened but what was thought or said about what happened.

III

The first law of thermodynamics, the principle of conservation of energy, was enunciated in the 1840's by Mayer and Helmholtz in Germany, Joule in England, and Colding in Denmark. There were a number of other persons who entertained energy-conservation ideas before and after the 1840's, but in one way or another they provided less satisfactory formulations of the principle than the persons mentioned. Suffice it to say that conservation of energy was an independent, multiple discovery that burst forth among various European scientific investigators who were more closely tied to civil and military engineering, medicine, physiology, and brewing than to anything going on at the academic centers in the physical sciences.

In Julius Robert Mayer, the law takes the form of an assertion that various forms of energy are qualitatively transformable, quantitatively indestructable, imponderable objects.[1] In the work of Mayer, Joule, and Colding, there are also theoretical calculations and experimental investigations expressly designed to give the numerical equivalence of various forms of energy. Except for a rider to the first law, which Einstein attached in 1905 for mass-energy conversions, there are no clear-cut natural processes known to violate the principle of conservation of energy. In other words, it is impossible, by mechanical, chemical, thermal, or any other devices, to construct any kind of perpetual-motion machine that creates energy from nothing.

The second law of thermodynamics (an extension of Sadi Carnot's principle of 1824, and Clapeyron's algebraic and graphical representation of the same in 1834) was formulated in various ways by Clausius, Kelvin, Boltzmann, and others after 1850. This law extends beyond the principle of energy conservation by dealing with the direction in which a process can take place in nature; that is, energy conservation does not suffice for a unique determination of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

natural processes. For example, the second law stipulates how an exchange of heat by conduction can take place between two bodies of different temperature. The principle, therefore, tells something about the quantity of heat that can be converted into mechanical energy in an ideal heat engine operating at a given temperature differential between the combustion chamber and the exhaust.

This means that available and unavailable energy can be distinguished and meaningfully discussed. In fact, the capacity factor for unavailable energy is an extremely versatile thermodynamic function called entropy. In all systems in which boundary conditions are defined in such a way that no energy transfers can take place across the boundaries, the entropy increases for all spontaneous processes within the system. Entropy increase corresponds to a decrease in the available energy. The net result is that in all natural processes some energy ends up being unavailable. An equivalent statement would be to say that systems in nature move spontaneously from order to disorder, from lesser to greater randomness, or toward a state of maximum probability.

In 1865 Clausius put the first and second laws of thermodynamics into the following simple verbal form: "The energy of the universe is constant. The entropy of the universe tends towards a maximum."[2] These two statements, along with various logical and illogical extensions of the energy and entropy principle, constitute the background to the following discussion of the interaction of science and religion.

IV

The acceptance of the laws of thermodynamics, slow at first, especially among physicists and chemists, was followed by a period of rapid exploitation that revolutionized and unified the study of chemistry, heat theory, heat engines, radiation, electricity, and magnetism. Less respectable, but nevertheless real, were the far-reaching deductions, discussions, and speculations regarding the significance of thermodynamic concepts in cosmological works dealing with the source of the sun's energy, the origin of the solar system, and views on the expanding and contracting universe. On the strength of the many far-reaching inferences that had been derived from a small number of axioms, thermodynamics, by the end of the nineteenth century, had taken its place alongside mechanics and electromagnetics as one of the main theoretical pillars of classical physics.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was virtually inevitable that some of the thermodynamic excitement of the nineteenth century should carry over into speculations concerning the problems of physiology, biological vitalism, and life in general. In truth, thermodynamics not only put its stamp on scientific thought but influenced, as well, social and political thought, psychology, literature, history, philosophy, and religion.

Already in 1863 Sir William G. Armstrong in his Presidential Address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science remarked that the dynamical theory of heat and the new views on energy (or "force," as it was loosely referred to then) probably constituted the most important discovery of the century.[3] By that time, the principle of conservation of energy had been applied not only to motion, heat, light, electricity, magnetism, and chemical affinity, but also to problems encountered in the world of organic life: animal and vegetable heat, digestion, respiration, muscular force, nervous agency, vital power, the development of organized animal and vegetable structure from dormant, primordial germ cells, and the effects of plant and animal sensation and consciousness.[4]

One of the most widely-read authors on this broad "philosophical" subject was the English lawyer and physicist William R. Grove, whose famous *Correlation of Physical Forces,* first published in 1846, went through numerous English and American editions and kept the public informed on how the relentless march of the knowledge of various "forces" was solving the new problems of science. Grove remarked that it was highly probable "that when discovered, and their modes of action fully traced out," these forces would "be found to be related *inter se,* and to these forces as these are to each other." This he believed "to be as far certain as certainty can be predicted of any future event." Thus he concluded:

> Many existing phenomena, hitherto believed distinct, will be connected and explained: explanation is, indeed, only relation to something more familiar, not more known—i.e., known as to causative or creative agencies. In all phenomena the more closely they are investigated the more are we convinced that, humanly speaking, neither matter nor force can be created or annihilated, and that an essential cause is unattainable—Causation is the will, Creation the act, of God.[5]

William B. Carpenter, an eminent and unflagging English investigator in the sciences of zoology, botany, and mental physiology, wrote on the correlation of physical and vital forces with a gasconade that surely must have embarrassed the founders of the principle of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conservation of energy. In a paper of 1850, Carpenter took up the problem of the mutual relation (metamorphosis and conversion) of the physical forces to the vital processes of plant and animal growth, development, reproduction, and the evolution of complex heterogeneous structures from homogeneous germinal masses.[6] By applying the principle of correlation (conservation) of forces to vital phenomena, he hoped to open new lines of inquiry that would invest the physiological sciences with the same dynamic aspects as the physical sciences exhibited.[7]

The particular *modus operandi* of "Cell-force" in the cell-formation of plants was compared to "Engine-power," which term, Carpenter remarked, was used "knowing that the steam-engine possesses no power itself, but that it is simply that instrument most commonly employed, because the most convenient and advantageous yet devised, for the application of the expansive force of steam, generated by the application of heat, to the production of mechanical motion."[8] Carpenter found the forces in the growth, development, and movement of animals to be essentially the same as "Cell-force" in plants, except for an additional "Nervous agency" related to the conscious mind, which communicated impressions derived from the external world and was related to the working of contractile tissues in obedience to mental impulses. He wrote: "For, just as electricity developed by chemical change may operate (by its correlation with chemical affinity) in producing other chemical changes elsewhere, so may nerve-force, which has its origin in cell-formation, excite or modify the process of cell-formation in other parts, and thus influence all the vital manifestations of the several tissues, whatever may be their own individual characters." He thus hoped to have established "the general proposition, that so close a mutual relation exists between all the vital forces, that they may be legitimately regarded as *modes* of one and the same force."[9]

As for the relations of the vital to the physical forces, Carpenter proceeded to demonstrate to his satisfaction that "Nervous Force" ("the *highest* of all the forms of vital force, both in its relations to mental action, and in its dominant power over organic processes of every kind") is perfectly correlated and mutually convertible with electricity, heat, light, magnetism, motion, and chemical affinity.

Notwithstanding these physical comparisons, Carpenter retained, as Liebig had, the pre-existence of a living organism necessary for the development of an "organized structure of even the simplest kind." He wrote:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is the *speciality* of the material substratum thus furnishing the medium or instrument of the metamorphosis which . . . establishes and must ever maintain a well-marked boundary-line between the Physical and the Vital forces. Starting with the abstract notion of Force, as emanating at once from the Divine Will, we might say that this force, operating through inorganic matter, manifests itself in electricity, magnetism, light, heat, chemical affinity, and mechanical motion; but that, when directed through organized structures, it effects the operations of growth, development, chemico-vital transformation, and the like; and is further metamorphosed, through the instrumentality of the structures thus generated, into nervous agency and muscular power.[10]

Thus, for Carpenter, "all *force* which does not emanate from the will of created sentient beings, directly and immediately proceeds from the Will of the Omnipotent and Omnipresent Creator." What he called "physical forces" were just "so many *modi operandi* of one and the same agency, the creative and sustaining will of the Deity."[11] Carpenter maintained reservations concerning the extension of the doctrine of evolution to man's intellectual and spiritual nature, even though he admitted that man had moved by "grades of organic ascent" from an analysis of physical forces such as heat and light to an analysis of nervous agency and muscular power.

V

The energy-conservation principle was used in some fairly untamed, speculative, and theologically grounded arguments in the works of the physicist Grove and the physiologist Carpenter. But in none of the early expositions of the energy principle did *philosophy* run riot quite so wildly as in the writings of Herbert Spencer. Spencer was a representative of a widely disseminated naturalistic interpretation of phenomena that rested, in his case, upon a strange synthesis of ideas drawn from evolutionary theory, the principle of conservation of energy, and a humanitarian, religious metaphysics. He was described by one of his friends as "radical all over."

In the *First Principles* of 1862, Spencer attempted to reconcile science and religion on the broad postulate of belief in the *Unknowable* as the cause of all phenomenal existence. The deepest, widest, and most certain of all facts, for Spencer, was that the *Power* which the universe manifests to man is utterly inscrutable. Thus, "ultimate scientific ideas" like force, space, and time were all representative of realities that could not be comprehended; they passed all understanding.[12]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For Spencer, the scientific idea of "force," rooted in primordial experiences, was the ultimate of ultimates. One did not know, he said, what force as an ultimate was; the law of its manifestations could be inferred from experience, but never derived inductively. This law was the law of conservation of energy. "Persistence of force" was the expression that Huxley had suggested and Spencer preferred.[13]

In his chapter on "the correlation and equivalence of forces," Spencer added "mental forces" to the same generalization (the same law of metamorphosis) that he recognized as having been enunciated for physical forces on the basis of the experimental investigations of Mayer, Joule, Helmholtz, and Grove.[14]

> Those modes of the Unknowable which we call motion, heat, light, chemical affinity, etc. are alike transformable into each other, and [also] into those modes of the Unknowable which we distinguish as sensation, emotion, thought: these, in their turns, being directly or indirectly transformable into the original shapes.

He then added:

> Of course if the law of correlation and equivalence holds of the forces we class as vital and mental, it must hold also of those we class as social . . . [and] if we ask whence come these physical forces from which, through the intermediation of the vital forces, the social forces arise, the reply is of course as heretofore—the solar radiations.[15]

Spencer concluded by saying "the deepest truths we can reach are simply statements of the widest uniformities in our experience of the relations of Matter, Motion, and Force; and Matter, Motion, and Force are but symbols of the Unknown Reality."[16] Science, as in the unknowable ultimate of ultimates, namely *force*, coalesced with religion in the "consciousness of an Incomprehensible Omnipotent Power"—an Absolute Being. Religion and science were, nevertheless, both rooted in the common datum of all human thought, in the law of the "persistence of force." But the establishment of the correlation and equivalence between the forces of the outer (matter) and the inner (spirit) world, for Spencer, was a matter of the assimilation of either to the other, "according as we set out with one or the other term."

Related views on force were spelled out by Spencer in the section on "Ecclesiastical Institutions" in the third volume (Principles of Sociology) of his *Synthetic Philosophy* of 1885.[17] Here he was concerned with the history of religion and religious institutions and the elements of *power* that entered into all primitive

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

religions. Acknowledging elements of power beyond consciousness, as evidenced in muscular power, ghost force, sun-worship, the powers of medicine men and priests, Spencer concluded that all religions had a natural genesis that led upward from the most primitive anthropomorphisms to gods, inscrutable, unknowable, and omnipotent. The divinity that was synonymous with superiority eventually became non-anthropomorphic in the idea of force. This idea reached its extreme form in the man of science who could properly interpret the idea of the "persistence of force" in terms of all possible kinds of physical, biological, mental, and nervous phenomena.

Thus, higher faculty and deeper insight raised the sentiments of the man of science to a vision, though dim and incomplete, of ultimate existence.

> And this feeling is not likely to be decreased but to be increased by that analysis of knowledge which, while forcing him to agnosticism, yet continually prompts him to imagine some solution of the Great Enigma which he knows cannot be solved. . . . But one truth must grow ever clearer—the truth that there is an Inscrutable Existence everywhere manifested, to which [man] . . . can neither find nor conceive either beginning or end. Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he is ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed.[18]

Ernst Haeckel, a biologist of enormous literary output and Professor of Zoology at the University of Jena, was a most enthusiastic apostle of Darwinism in Germany. He applied the principle of conservation of energy (in combination with biological evolution) to some of the oldest problems in philosophy and religion. His *Die Welträthsel* of 1899, which appeared in English in 1900 as *The Riddle of the Universe,* adopted an inflexible, materialistic, monistic position that laid down the intrinsic unity of organic and inorganic nature and propounded the evolution of the highest level of the human faculties from unicellular protozoa. While Haeckel rejected the immortality of the soul, freedom of the will, and the existence of a personal deity, he did not, he claimed, reject religion *per se.* His "monistic religion" with its "monistic church" was, he said, a monism connecting religion and science but freed from the dead and dried-up superstitions of the traditional church religions.

In *Der Monismus als Band zwischen Religion und Wissenschaft,* written in 1892, Haeckel proposed that the most important general consequence of the spiritual conquest of modern science belonged

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the law of substance (*Substanz-Gesetz*)—and that this was to be designated as the first paragraph of the "monistic religion of reason" (i.e., *die monistische Vernunftsreligion*). In a remarkable essay of 1895,[19] Haeckel wrote concerning this law:

> This supreme basic law of the cosmos actually consists of two intimately related laws: of the "law of the conservation of matter" for which we are indebted to the great French chemist Lavoisier, and of the "law of the conservation of energy" whose founding is shared by two German intellectual heroes—the South-German Robert Mayer and the North-German Hermann Helmholtz. As "matter and energy" are inseparably combined in every thing, so also these two basic "conservation laws" hang together in one law of substance. For the religion of reason of the science of today this law of substance is just as much the immovable foundation stone as the dogma of the "infallibility of the Pope" is for the Catholic church of today—the rudest slap in the face for reason.[20]

Professor Haeckel then ridiculed the behavior of the mourners of the recently deceased Helmholtz. They behaved no better than Darwin's mourners had thirteen years earlier in the pantheon of Westminster Abbey. Haeckel asked whether the highly-respected gentlemen who heard the church bells ring in Berlin for Helmholtz realized that they were honoring "a free-thinker who ought in their eyes to have been a revolutionary, mangy, heretic of the first order." Did none of them know that the greatest contribution of Helmholtz, the "law of substance," was the first paragraph of the "monistic religion," and that it was connected inseparably with Darwin's infamous "materialistic" theory of evolution?

VI

Edward L. Youmans, the self-taught American promoter of science education, was an ardent apostle of evolution and a devotee of the Spencerian philosophy. Youmans' influence on American scientific thought, in his role as a popular lecturer and as editor of the *International Scientific Series*, was impressive. This still on-going series, which published over fifty volumes during his lifetime, included works by Liebig, Helmholtz, Darwin, and Huxley; Spencer apparently never delivered the manuscript he had promised. Youmans, who moved in the circles of William H. Appleton, Horace Greeley, and Walt Whitman, also secured the establishment of the *Popular Scientific Monthly*.

Youmans' compilation of essays on *The Correlation and Con-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

servation of Forces was published in 1865 to show that scientific inquiries were shifting from questions about matter to questions of force. Material ideas were giving place to dynamical ideas; and Youmans wrote: "It has [been] shown that a pure principle forms the immaterial foundation of the universe. From the baldest materiality we rise at last to a truth of the spiritual world, of so exalted an order that it has been said 'to connect the mind of man with the Spirit of God.' "[21]

Youmans felt that the law of conservation of "force" had uncovered "a region which promises possessions richer than any hitherto granted to the intellect of man . . . [having] pressed its inquiries into the higher region of life, mind, society, history and education." The initiation of the "momentous event of intellectual progress" through the "establishment of a new philosophy of forces," Youmans predicted, would bring about a perfectly correlated, marvelous, dynamic unity of the whole living system. The interconvertible forces included were mechanical, thermal, luminous, electrical and chemical forces, organic nutrition, muscular power, sensation force, nerve power, mental force, will power, cerebral force, brain force, emotional and intellectual force.[22]

Thus, he wrote:

> Impressions made from moment to moment on all our organs of sense are directly correlated with external physical forces. This correlation, furthermore, is quantitative as well as qualitative. . . . Between the emotions and bodily actions the correlation and equivalence are also equally clear. . . . The intellectual operations are also directly correlated with physical activities. As in the inorganic world we know nothing of forces except as exhibited by matter, so in the higher intellectual realm we know nothing of mind-force except through its material manifestations.[23]

Youmans extended the force notion to include society and social economies as well:

> The law of correlation being thus applicable to human energy as well as to the powers of nature, it must also apply to society, where we constantly witness the conversion of forces on a comprehensive scale. . . . [Since according to the dynamical point of view there is a strict analogy between] the individual and the social economies—the same law of force governs the development of both. . . . The amount of energy . . . is limited, and when consumed for one purpose it cannot of course be had for another. . . . So with the social organism; its forces being limited, there is but a definite amount of power to be consumed in the various social activities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the force law had still higher bearings: history, the conditions of humanity, the progress of civilization, and the order of society in terms of the definite quantity of morality, justice, and liberty available. Societal progress, thus, depended upon the balance of these constantly changing ratios among the fixed quantity of the forces present—just as the individual growth of an organism depended upon the balance of physiological, intellectual, and passional forces present. "So with society, the measured action of its forces gives rise to a fixed amount of morality and liberty in each age, but that amount increases with social evolution."[24]

And what was the place of God in this exuberant paean to the conservation of energy? The future of science opened up the infinite, mysterious, worship-worthy Cause of it all.

> And if these high realities are but faint and fitful glimpses which science has obtained in the dim dawn of discovery, what must be the glories of the coming day? If indeed they are but "pebbles" gathered from the shores of the great ocean of truth, what are the mysteries still hidden in the bosom of the mighty unexplored? And how far transcending all stretch of thought that Unknown and Infinite Cause of all to which the human spirit turns evermore in solemn and mysterious worship![25]

Another American scientist, George Frederick Barker, who was some-time professor of chemistry, geology, physiological chemistry, toxicology, and physics at Wheaton College in Illinois, at Yale, and at the University of Pennsylvania, as well as president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Chemical Society, accepted, without reservation, the philosophy of the correlation of vital and physical force, and then managed somehow to twist the whole business to the glory of God. Barker wrote:

> I would fain believe that we now see more clearly the beautiful harmonies of bounteous nature; that on her many-stringed instrument force answers to force, like the notes of a great symphony; disappearing now in potential energy, and anon reappearing as actual energy, in a multitude of forms. I would hope that this wonderful unity and mutual interaction of force in the dead forms of inorganic nature appear to you identical in the living forms of animal and vegetable life which makes of our earth an Eden. . . . But here the great question rolls upon us, Is it only this? . . . Is there really no immortal portion separable from this brain-tissue, though yet mysteriously united to it? In a word does this curiously fashioned body inclose a soul, God-given and to God returning? Here science veils her face and bows in reverence before the Almighty. We have passed the boundaries by which physical science is inclosed. No crucible, no subtle magnetic needle can answer now our questions. No word but His who formed us can break the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

awful silence. In the presence of such a revelation Science is dumb and faith comes in joyfully to accept that higher truth which can never be the object of physical demonstration.[26]

VII

A non-theistic, monistic, and humanitarian exploitation of the philosophy of energeticism as a way of life was expounded in scores of books, pamphlets, and sermons by the renowned German physical chemist and Nobel Prize winner of 1909—Wilhelm Ostwald. In 1913, as President of the German Confederation of Monists, Ostwald delivered a lecture in Vienna that merits attention.[27] This lecture admirably demonstrated the anti-religious views of Ostwald with special reference to thermodynamics. Similar views were presented by Paul Carus, philosopher and editor of *Open Court* and *The Monist* in Chicago, and by Svante Arrhenius, who received the Nobel Prize in 1903 for his electrolytic dissociation theory.

Briefly, Ostwald characterized his brand of monism in this lecture of 1913 as a doctrine "which excludes all double-entry bookkeeping, which removes all barriers, hitherto regarded as insurmountable, between inner and outer life, between the life of the present and that of the future, between the existence of the body and that of the soul, and which comprehends all these things in a single unity that extends everywhere and leaves nothing outside its scope."[28]

Ostwald maintained that the record of man's past, since the pre-Socratic and Greek doctrines of the basic stuff of the universe, revealed man's attempt to struggle toward a unitary, monistic representation of the world. Thus, the history of philosophy was strewed with rejected monistic systems, including one that Ostwald also rejected, namely, the monism of a single supreme God. Ostwald argued that a unified self-consistent world-view was unattainable by means of any *a priori* monism. This included the monism of energy—as a principle. The only monism that Ostwald recognized was an *a posteriori* monism "which proceeds from the diversity of the world as from the data offered by experience." Thus, an *a posteriori* monism, as the future ideal of unity, was science; it was a monism of scientific thought and scientific method.[29]

Ostwald's program for scientific monism rested upon the completion of a process that he found to be already well under way, namely, the abolition of the barrier or dividing line that separated the provinces of science and religion. This extremely movable bar-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rier, Ostwald indicated, shifted invariably in the direction of enlarging and expanding the province of science at the expense of the province of religion. Ostwald predicted that the province of religion would become narrower and narrower until, reduced to almost nothing, religion would be forced to surrender. Drawing from the work of the "pathfinding psychologist" William James of Harvard University, Ostwald argued that the struggle of the priests against science was one that "always allows us to discern the incessant and irresistible advance of science into the departments hitherto occupied by religion."[30]

As a "specimen of the practical Monism" that man should endorse, Ostwald mentioned "the irresistible flow toward the international organization of human affairs." Only the movement toward greater unity in all of science, since the introduction and utilization of energy conservation in science, had made this flow toward international organization possible.

This was Ostwald's so-called doctrine of the "energetic imperative." He postulated: "There must evidently be an imperative and decisive moment in the existence of thought, which gives to the principle of unity . . . so great an impulse that the whole tendency of human intellectual evolution surrenders to its grasp." This movement "out of multifariousness to unity, especially out of the many dualisms to the one Monism" was, for Ostwald, symbolized by the "postulate of economy of energy."[31] In this manner, Ostwald moved from scientific monism to the principle of energy conservation as the grand unifying principle of science, and finally to an energeticism directive for the practical affairs of man in society.

> Thus: We know that we all live by virtue of the free energy that streams from the sun to the earth like a broad and powerful flood. [Our energetic imperative must avowedly be]: Waste no energy; turn it all to account. . . . Here, therefore, we have a genuine and far reaching Monism [which reaches from] the simplest technical trade, yes from the daily acts of our half-animal life, to the very highest sociological and ethical problems.

"The whole culture-evolution," said Ostwald, "which has led us from the invention of the slingstone, the lever, [and] fire . . . to a modern giant steamer . . . signifies nothing further than an always finer and more multiform manifestation of the energetic imperative. The same may be said of our moral evolution." And thus, for Ostwald, the whole prophetic quality of science turned on the great synthetic unity of man's expenditure of his available energy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Accordingly, at the present time, the principal task of scientific or Monistic thought and labor is manifestly to free the final science in the succession of sciences, sociology, from the hitherto existing influence of the priesthood, and to establish in place of the traditional ethics dependent on revelation a rational scientific ethics, based on facts.[32]

Ostwald concluded:

Proceeding along this pathway of thought, we have come to recognize that the highest values of Christianity, the kindness and love of the individual towards his fellowman, do not yet represent the highest ethical ideal which mankind can attain. Monism leads far more to the perception that the individual is more and more a mere cell in the collective organism of humanity. Accordingly, the evolution of kindness and love, the evolution of the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to the great whole of humanity, becomes more and more a demand of the energetic imperative, therefore an immanent demand of our whole Monistically ordered life. Only through the fact that we have come to recognize kindness and love as a necessity for community life, for the social organization of mankind, has there also been gained by the individual the sole sure and immovable foundation. That we practise mutual kindness and love is no longer the demand of a Godhead standing outside of ourselves, which has once for all transmitted it to us by an unverifiable revelation; but it is a demand of scientific intelligence. To it, of course, only those can belong who dedicate themselves to Monism unreservedly and without any remnants of dualistic thinking and feeling. With the increased broadening and deepening of this intelligence we see arrive the Monistic century, which will not remain the only one of its kind. But it will inaugurate a new epoch for humanity, just as two thousand years ago the preaching of the general love for humanity had inaugurated an epoch.[33]

VIII

During the nineteenth century, the meaning of the law of conservation of energy was examined within the context of theological issues dealing primarily with the mode of God's presence and action in the world. The law was commonly invoked to bolster the argument for the existence of a Deity who had ordered the world with perfect foresight, wisdom, and economy of action. Thus, matter (the stuff of the world) and energy (the action and process within the nature of things) were accepted as conserved quantities. They were built into a system of nature operating without over-all matter or energy losses. The argument for a world of law, order, and timeless permanence served theology very well as long as the laws of science were not seen to be so thoroughly successful in their account of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nature of things as to make God a mere benevolent, absentee landlord.

The philosophy of mechanism, based on the reduction of phenomena to matter and motion, had provided a serious threat to theism ever since the end of the seventeenth century. Indeed, deism was the bargain that religion had been disposed to make with mechanism. If God was not directly involved in the operations of nature, it was, nevertheless, still feasible to fall back on the belief that he had made it all in the first place. Unfortunately for Christianity, the God in the argument from design, the Divine Mechanic, was something quite unlike the God of the Bible.

With the seemingly boundless accomplishments of nineteenth-century thermodynamics in explaining the mysteries of inanimate and animate processes in nature, the energy concept, like the philosophy of mechanism, became a threat for those who were unwilling to relegate the description and resolution of the workings of nature, down to the smallest details, to the scientist. They considered thermodynamics, with its analytical jurisdiction over conversions and redistributions of energy without losses and without divine interference, to be no less tyrannical than mechanism had been. The works of energeticists like Ostwald were a fulmination to all that traditional religion had held in trust for centuries. Apart from Ostwaldian, monistic, and atheistic energeticism, some interpretations of the energy concept were viewed as injurious to questions concerning the possibility of miracles, the nature of free will, the creation and immateriality of the human soul, and the problem of death and immortality. There was an immensely spirited literature on this subject around the turn of the century.

A systematic, theological statement on the energy problem came from the Neo-Thomist or Neo-Scholastic study group at the Institut de Philosophie of the University of Louvain. The Institute was established by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 for the special purpose of teaching the doctrine of St. Thomas together with history and the natural sciences. The newly-created chair in Thomist philosophy was first occupied by the Belgian Cardinal, Désire Joseph Mercier, influential teacher and author, and editor of the *Revue Néo-Scholastique*.[34] The work of the Neo-Scholastics illustrated the criticisms that were leveled against certain historic formulations of the principle of conservation of energy. For example, Helmholtz in his essay of 1862 on the conservation of energy had said that "the quantity of all forces which can be put into action in the whole of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nature is unchangeable and can be neither increased nor decreased."[35] The first question that could be raised in connection with such a broad statement was: How far did the energy concept reach into vital life processes, the motor or sensory nerve cells of the brain, problems of volition, consciousness, the nature of the human soul, the relation of the soul to the body, questions of moral freedom, and divine interference in the form of miracles? Cardinal Mercier held, for example, that Helmholtz's statement was a hazardous leap from positive science to very speculative metaphysics; that the statement was beyond the possibility of experimental proof.

While the energy-conservation principle obtained for many systems, the Neo-Thomists denied that it had been satisfactorily demonstrated for physiological and psycho-physical systems, consciousness, the human mind, and the moral law. Spencer's doctrine was erroneous because it converted the "persistence of force" into an absolute. Ostwald's views were false because they rejected matter and defined "energy" so that it took the place of "substance" in all processes of change—matter thereby becoming the mere capacity for the action of energy.

What about the conservation of energy in relation to the human soul? Could the soul or the mind initiate or modify nature by resultant changes in matter and energy in the world? The Neo-Thomist answer to this question was *yes*. The thoughts, feelings, and volitions of men did influence physical events. The soul was able to act on matter; if not, there would be no freedom of the will.

The next question was *how* did the soul act on matter? By means of particular forms of energy interconvertible with other forms of energy? The Neo-Thomist answer was *no;* otherwise the soul would be reduced to a form of energy or a mechanism. The soul, therefore, could not act on matter by means of any guiding or directing energy, not even by means of a microscopic hair-trigger pressure movement. The chasms between the two orders of soul and matter were intellectually impassible.

The mechanism of the soul's influence on physical events could only be explained synthetically. The explanation required both scientific information and religious interpretation; the philosophy of Aristotle and St. Thomas provided the clue. Thus, Cardinal Mercier reawakened the Scholastic distinction between matter and form; where matter and form nevertheless existed only in conjunction. The "informing principle of substance" and "substance" coalesced in the specific existences which partook of the nature of things.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A prominent representative of the Neo-Thomist movement in England was Michael Maher, Director of Studies and Professor of Pedagogics at St. Mary's Hall. Father Maher, S.J., wrote in *The Catholic Encyclopedia:*

> The function . . . of this active informing principle is of a unifying, conserving, restraining character, holding back, as it were, and sustaining the potential energies of the organism in their unstable condition. From this view of the relation of the soul to the material constituents of the body, it would follow that the transformation of the potential energies of the living organism is accompanied in vital processes not by anything akin to positive physical pressure, but by some sort of liberative act. It would in this case suffice simply to unloose, to "let go," to cease the act of restraining, and the unstable forms of energy released will thereby issue of themselves into other forms. In a sack of gas or liquid, for instance, the covering membrane determines the contents to a particular shape, and conserves them in a particular space. Somewhat analogously, in the Scholastic theory the soul, as "form," determines the qualitative character of the material with which it coalesces while it conserves the living being in its specific nature.[36]

The theory thus avoided the dualism of body and soul. Body and soul acted as a co-principle, with neither outside the other. The directing influence of the soul was not dependent upon the action on matter of something outside of it. "The soul is *in* the body which it animates and in every part of it."[37]

The claim of the Neo-Thomist doctrine for restricting the energy-conservation principle to statements that could not go beyond experimental proof (i.e., that could not, therefore, extend into the domain of man's soul without reducing the soul to matter or energy) rested its case upon the construction of a synthetic philosophy that opened up the possibility of the soul's action on matter. Purportedly this solution, therefore, also solved problems that otherwise remained unanswerable—such as freedom of the will, *creation* of the human soul, and the *departure* of the immortal soul. Neither *creation* nor *departure* was merely a matter-energy collocation. Neo-Thomist philosophy, consequently, played an important synthetic function in the matter of providing a meaningful synthetic interpretation of the energy concept. On the other hand, the Neo-Thomists insisted that a complete knowledge of the details furnished by the individual sciences was necessary for the synthetic explanations to have any meaning.

A thorough-going criticism of the Neo-Thomist interpretation of the energy concept came from the German philosopher Konstantin

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gutberlet, who was very much preoccupied with the theological proofs for the existence of God. In *Das Gesetz von der Erhaltung der Kraft und seine Beziehung zur Metaphysik*, written in 1885, Gutberlet attempted to support the substantial form of the energy notion with modern physical arguments.

The English physicist and author, Sir Oliver Lodge, who had spoken on behalf of Christian orthodoxy against Haeckel's law of substance (conservation of matter and energy, conjointly), also expressed a view that was at variance with the Neo-Thomists. Lodge, who devoted almost as much effort trying to establish communication between the living and the dead as he did in research on electromagnetic problems, believed that matter and ether were substantial things—in fact, the only fundamental realities known to physical science. Energy and force, like movement, were mere abstract expressions. Life was not energy, but a director of energy and matter; vital force was nonsensical. Nevertheless, Lodge believed that the action of life on matter was analogous to a hair-trigger release of large quantities of energy. He wrote: "So, inasmuch as liberation of energy can be accompanied by work entirely incommensurate with the result, it would appear that ultimately it can be achieved by no 'work' at all—through the mysterious intervention of the brain as a connective between the psychic and physical worlds, which otherwise would not be in touch."[38] Such a view was categorically rejected by the Neo-Thomists as an example of soul acting on body by mechanistic or energetistic means.

IX

The second law of thermodynamics raised theological issues of a different character. If the principle of the increase of entropy of any operating system was extended to the world or the universe as a system, then the universe was moving toward a state of maximum probability, a configuration of maximum randomness, a condition of minimum availability of energy. This irreversible process, this unidirectional movement toward disorganization in history (time's arrow), led to a degradation of the energy sources and ultimately to that pessimistic state of affairs, that boredom or Nirvana, that was called the "heat-death" of the universe. Thermodynamics accordingly predicted an end to everything as a function of time.

Such a theory, which injected into the minds of men a majestic dysteleology that would eventuate in the consummation of the world, was bound to unleash polemics from religion. Ends and beginnings—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

creation's end and origin—were matters that theologians could hardly side-step. What would come to an end? And what consituted a beginning or a creation?

The controversial published correspondence that took place in 1933 and 1934 between Arnold Lunn and J. B. S. Haldane[39] was representative of criticisms of the theological uses of the entropy principle. Lunn, a Madras-born novelist, was converted to Catholicism during the course of his correspondence with the evolutionist Haldane, who was then Professor of Genetics at University College in London. In his discussions on "proofs of God's existence," Haldane chose as his target for criticism the first proof of St. Thomas in the *Summa Theologica,* the argument of the unmoved mover. St. Thomas's philosophy, he concluded, was based on antiquated science and faulty mathematics.

For various "physical reasons," Haldane found invalid the second law, which purported to demonstrate that the world could not have existed for all times and which, consequently, might have given new support for the theory of an unmoved mover. According to Haldane, the universe might be spatially infinite, making any argument for finite systems possibly fallacious. Even if finite, the universe might fluctuate between increasing and diminishing entropies that corresponded to the running-down and the building-up of the available energy; some apparently irreversible events in a space-expanding universe (such as the radiation of heat to cold bodies) might be reversed in a space-contracting universe.[40] All of these physically feasible alternatives excluded the heat-death of the universe. Since they also did not support *processes* or *beginnings* and *creations,* Haldane concluded that the proof of God as first cause or unmoved mover failed by implication.

Lunn's reaction to the argument for God from entropy considerations supported Haldane's criticism—but for a different reason. Lunn responded: "I am reluctant to hitch the wagon of faith to the shooting star of scientific fashion. For all we know, relativity and the quantum theory and entropy will one day join their predecessors in the limbo of discarded scientific fads."[41] Thus, Haldane had no use for supernatural religion, while Lunn had no use for anything but rationalistic religion—which he used to defend miracles and the supernatural, and to combat naturalism, materialism, evolution, Marxism, and Protestantism. Both seemingly agreed on the irrelevance of entropy considerations to the proof of God's existence: Haldane because he could not, at heart, believe in God; Lunn be-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cause he did not want his belief in God to be tied to the perennially obsolete fashions of science.[42]

Compare this with the view of Sir Arthur Eddington, astronomer-mathematician at Cambridge University. Eddington's conviction concerning what religion arises from, while not grounded in a rejection of reasoning of the kind Lunn championed, nevertheless rested upon the belief that the ultimate data for reasoning was given through a non-reasoning process. According to Eddington, this process was founded upon a state of self-knowledge or awareness of what was given in consciousness. For Eddington, this was at least as significant as what was given in sensation.

Eddington repudiated, on the one hand, the "idea of proving the distinctive beliefs of religion either from the data of physical science or by the methods of physical science."[43] On the other hand, he did not have so low an opinion of the entropy principle as Lunn had. In his analysis of the relation of entropy to chance coincidences and random elements, Eddington wrote:

> Entropy continually increases. We can, by isolating parts of the world and postulating rather idealized conditions in our problems, arrest the increase, but we cannot turn it into a decrease. That would involve something much worse than a violation of an ordinary law of Nature, namely an improbable coincidence. The law that entropy always increases—the second law of thermodynamics—holds, I think, the supreme position among the laws of Nature. If someone points out to you that your pet theory of the universe is in disagreement with Maxwell's equations—then so much the worse for Maxwell's equations. If it is found to be contradicted by observation—well, these experimentalists do bungle things sometimes. But if your theory is found to be against the second law of thermodynamics I can give you no hope; there is nothing for it but to collapse in deepest humiliation. This exaltation of the second law is not unreasonable . . .; the chance against a breach of the second law (i.e. against a decrease of the random element) can be stated in figures which are overwhelming.[44]

William Ralph Inge, Dean of St. Paul's in London, approached the second-law problem in a manner radically different from that of Haldane, Lunn, or Eddington. To Inge, an arch reactionary, Christian Neo-Platonist, the myths of progress and evolution were anathemas. Just as Lunn had been convinced that Martin Luther was the father of the modern revolt against reason,[45] Inge, sometimes called "the gloomy dean," was convinced that the fatal error of Catholic theology had been to find a rationalistic foundation for faith. In *God and the Astronomers*, Inge undertook to demonstrate that any

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

philosopher or theologian who wished to write on cosmology ("the relation of God to the universe") had to be informed on modern astronomy and physics. The research in these fields, he argued, could no longer be brushed aside as irrelevant to metaphysics or theology. "Science and philosophy," he wrote, "cannot be kept in watertight compartments."[46]

> God is revealing Himself to our age mainly through the book of nature. . . . This knowledge is given to us for a purpose. . . . Science has been called . . . the *purgatory* of religion. The study of nature . . . purifies our ideas about God and reality. It makes us ashamed of our petty interpretations of the world—ashamed of thinking that the universe was made solely for our benefit.

Thus, Inge suggested that "the man of science worships a greater God than the average church-goer."[47]

Essentially, Dean Inge warned the theologians not to ignore the scientists. What they were doing was directly relevant to theological doctrines. He felt that the religious and philosophical significance of the second law of thermodynamics—that new "Götterdämmerung," as Spengler called it—had something to say about the ultimate fate of the world.[48] Inge argued that if the universe was running down like a clock, the clock must have been wound up at some specific time. If the second law predicted an end in time for the world, then the world must have had a beginning in time. Thus, Inge could ask, "Is science itself driving us back to the traditional Christian doctrine that God created the world out of nothing?"[49]

If the second law led to perdition, Inge was saying, then man must accept it. This was, after all, a very Christian idea. The belief that the species would inherit the earth was hardly a Biblical doctrine. The Bible did not forecast unending temporal progress, nor an evolving God, but rather the blessed hope of everlasting life. "Modern philosophy [with Time itself an absolute value, and progress a cosmic principle] is, as I maintain, wrecked on the Second Law of Thermodynamics; it is no wonder that it finds the situation intolerable, and wriggles piteously to escape from its toils."[50]

Dean Inge found the second law to be at odds with the theory of evolution. Since the universe was moving toward thermal equilibrium—its heat-death—both biological evolution and the idea of progress were illusions. The human species had on earth "no continuing city," and it should therefore "ascend with heart and mind" to its "citizenship . . . in heaven."[51]

The concept of an "end to man's history" raised a host of ques-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions that occupied religious scholars for decades. Was it consistent with God's goodness to annihilate creation through the heat-death? What meaning could be attached to any values—in the mind of God—when man's history on earth was terminated? For whom, and in what way, would these values be preserved and manifested? Would real existence reside solely in God when only dead brute matter remained in the world? If so, how could God's will and purpose be exercised at all? What, if anything, would then become the appropriate vehicle for the exercise of God's will and his creative powers? If creation was one of the symbols of the Creator, then in what way might an eternity of pessimism and doom represent an appropriate image of creation? Did "God," indeed, have any meaning in a universe that was not an abode for conscious life? And why would God create in order to destroy?

The second law seemed to be fatal to any meaningful view of the ultimate relation between the world and intelligent beings—except, of course, within a metaphysical system similar to the one provided by the Dean of St. Paul's. Inge could simply reply that God was not limited to forms of expression that fell within the framework of man's knowledge. God could exist, if he so willed, without man; the world was not so necessary to God as God was to the world. "As a pleasure garden this world may be a failure; but it was never meant to be a pleasure garden."[52]

The French scientist-philosopher-historian Pierre Duhem commented on the relation between the second law of thermodynamics and religion in 1905,[53] when he replied to an article by Abel Rey.[54] While discussing Duhem's opinions concerning physical theories, Rey had implied that Duhem's scientific philosophy had demonstrated that Duhem was a believer.

Duhem wrote: "Of course, I believe with all my soul in the truths that God has revealed to us and that He has taught us through His Church. . . . In this sense, it is permissible to say that the physics I profess is the physics of a believer." But Abel Rey had meant more than that; he had meant that:

> The beliefs of the Christian [Duhem] had more or less conspicuously guided the criticism of the physicist [Duhem]; that they had inclined his reason to certain conclusions . . . [that might] appear suspect to minds concerned with scientific rigor but alien to the spiritualist philosophy or Catholic dogma; in short, that one must be a believer, not to mention being a perspicacious one, in order to adopt altogether the principles as well as the consequences of the doctrine that I [Duhem] have tried to formulate concerning physical theories.[55]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This Duhem denied. He was perfectly willing to admit that he was a Christian positivist. "Physics," he wrote, "proceeds by an autonomous method absolutely independent of any metaphysical opinion." Theories had no "abilities to penetrate beyond the teachings of experiment or any capacity to surmise realities hidden under data observable by the senses." Theories no more had the power to draw the plan of any metaphysical system than "metaphysical doctrines had the right to testify for or against any physical theory. If all these efforts have terminated only in a conception clandestinely postulated, then I confess I have been strangely mistaken about the result to which my work was tending."

Before admitting such a mistake, Duhem was anxious to fix his gaze particularly on those parts of his physics in which "the seal of the Christian faith was believed noticeable, and to recognize whether against . . . [his] intention, this seal [was] really impressed therein or else, on the contrary, whether an illusion, easy to dissipate, [had] not led to the taking of certain characteristics not belonging to the work as the mark of a believer." In any case, "the believer and [the] non-believer [might] both work in common accord for the progress of physical science."[56]

Duhem supported a physical system positivist in both its origins and its conclusions. According to him, physical theories were not metaphysical explanations; nor were they a set of general laws the truth of which was established by experiment and induction. Physical theories were artificial constructions that mathematically related abstract notions which emerged from experiment. They were "a kind of synoptic painting or schematic sketch suited to summarize and classify the laws of observation." Thus, as to their origins, the "reflections on the meaning and scope of physical theories were induced by preoccupations in which metaphysics and religion had no part." On the other hand, "they terminated in conclusions which have nothing to do with metaphysical doctrines and nothing to do with religious dogmas." It became crucial, therefore, to define a "theoretical physics for whose progress positivists and metaphysicians, materialists and spiritualists, nonbelievers and Christians may work with common accord."[57]

Duhem felt that his physical system eliminated "the alleged objections of physical science to spiritualistic metaphysics and the Catholic faith"; that is, it denied "physical theory any metaphysical or apologetic import." Accordingly, a principle of theoretical physics could neither contradict nor confirm a proposition formulated in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

religion—simply because "there [could not] be disagreement or agreement between a proposition touching on an objective reality and another proposition which [had] no objective import."[58]

Thermodynamics as a physical principle was no exception to Duhem's rule. He said:

> In the middle of the last century, Clausius, after profoundly transforming Carnot's principle, drew from it the following famous corollary: The entropy of the universe tends toward a maximum. From this theorem many a philosopher maintained the conclusion of the impossibility of a world in which physical and chemical changes would go on being produced forever; it pleased them to think that these changes had had a beginning and would have an end; creation in time, if not of matter, at least of its aptitude for change, and the establishment in a more or less remote future of a state of absolute rest and universal death were for these thinkers inevitable consequences of the principles of thermodynamics.[59]

Duhem suggested that several fallacies marred such a deduction:

> First of all, it implicitly assumes the assimilation of the universe to a finite collection of bodies isolated in a space absolutely void of matter; and this assimilation exposes one to many doubts. Once this assimilation is admitted, it is true that the entropy of the universe has to increase endlessly, but it does not impose any lower or upper limit on this entropy; nothing then would stop this magnitude from varying from $-\infty$ to $+\infty$ while the time itself varied from $-\infty$ to $+\infty$; then the allegedly demonstrated impossibilities regarding an eternal life for the universe would vanish.[60]

More important for Duhem was the objection based on "the very essence of physical theory": "We shall show that it is absurd to question this theory for information concerning events which might have happened in an extremely remote past, and absurd to demand of it predictions of events a very long way off."

It was absurd because physical theories were mathematical propositions that represented the data of experiment. "If two different theories represent the same facts with the same degree of approximation, [then] physical method considers them to have absolutely the same validity." The scientist was, consequently, free to choose among logically equivalent theories according to considerations of "elegance, simplicity, and convenience, and grounds of suitability which are essentially subjective, contingent, and variable with time, with schools, and with persons."[61]

Thermodynamics too, in Duhem's system, employed arbitrary theories that were adequate to the job at hand. The predictions of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

such theories merited a certain degree of confidence, but their logic gave no grounds on which to assert that the predictions of these theories, and not others, would be in conformity with reality. Thus, with respect to any long-term predictions, the principles of thermodynamics had no unambiguous truth status.

Duhem said:

> We possess a thermodynamics which represents very well a multitude of experimental laws, and it tells us that the entropy of an isolated system increases eternally. We could without difficulty construct a new thermodynamics which would represent as well as the old thermodynamics the experimental laws known until now, and whose predictions would go along in agreement with those of the old thermodynamics for ten thousand years; and yet, this new thermodynamics might tell us that the entropy of the universe after increasing for a period of 100 million years will decrease over a new period of 100 million years in order to increase again in an eternal cycle.
>
> By its very essence experimental science is incapable of predicting the end of the world as well as of asserting its perpetual activity. Only a gross misconception of its scope could have claimed for it the proof of a dogma affirmed by our faith.[62]

Consequently, according to Duhem's view, the scientist needed to know nothing about metaphysics in order to do science, but the "metaphysician should know physical theory in order not to make an illegitimate use of it in his speculation."[63]

XI

The knowledge of the second law of thermodynamics was in the general scientific domain while some of the enthusiastic supporters of biological evolution were indulging in the nineteenth century's most jubilant songs of progress. In fact, the mood of sympathy for movements toward greater perfection, which was often read into evolution, infected most of the religiously enlightened persons during the Victorian reign—not to speak of its spread into the literature of philosophy, aesthetics, and the political, social, and historical sciences. Evolutionary theory was equated with hope, with the law of progress, the lay creed of men of science; entropy considerations prophesied a pessimism of despair, a future of disillusionment.

Spencer could feel empathetic with the energetic concepts and simultaneously identify progress with the increasing complexity offered through evolution. Energeticists like Ostwald stressed those aspects of the second law of thermodynamics that dealt with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spontaneous irreversibility of time and what it signified for man's progress. Ostwald had in mind, naturally, the element of irreversibility and progress in the development of culture, aesthetics, morals, and man's store of knowledge. This was the human race's inheritance; it resulted from man's accumulative and irreversible progress. This was an exploitation of time's arrow that did not dwell on the final, dismal outcome of things. Thus, Ostwald played down the gloomier aspects of the second law by ignoring them completely.

References to thermodynamics and religion—some oblique, some not so oblique, and some quite blunt—are to be found in the writings of many scientists. Mayer, Joule, and Colding included theological comments along with their formulations of the first law. John Tyndall, the Irish physicist, attributed a wider grasp and a more radical significance to the doctrine of the conservation of energy than to the theory of the origin of the species. Energy conservation, he thought, "bound nature fast in faith" by bringing vital as well as physical phenomena under the dominion of causal connection. He wrote: "If our spiritual authorities could only devise a form in which the heart might express itself without putting the intellect to shame, they might utilize a power which they now waste, and make prayer, instead of a butt to the scorner, a potent supplement of noble outward life."[64]

Lord Kelvin excluded living organisms in his statement of the second law. Svante Arrhenius, while admitting the universality of the second law, thought that rare exceptions might occur leading to the rebuilding of worlds—perhaps by some conscious Maxwellian demon. Émile Meyerson concluded that the second law was an obstacle fatal to the mechanical explanation of the universe.

The philosophies of Nietzsche, Whitehead, and Russell were not inconsequent on these problems. Henri Bergson called the second law the most metaphysical of all the principles of nature because of its implication of a beginning in time. Freud and Jung took a new look at religious experience with the help of wild ideas and brand-new expressions: the energy-laden world waiting to react on man, traumatic neuroses in relation to bound "psychic energy," the *Ich-Energie* as narcissistic libido or desexualized eros, cathectic energy, entropy and the death wish. William James wrote: "Though the ultimate state of the universe may be its vital and physical extinction, there is nothing in physics to interfere with the hypothesis that the *penultimate* state might be the millennium. The last expiring pulsation of the universe might be—I am so happy and perfect that I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can stand it no longer."[65] Henry Adams thought the universe had been so terribly narrowed by thermodynamics that history and sociology had to "gasp for breath." The worship of the dynamo had replaced the worship of the Virgin of Chartres.

XII

If the religious frenzy engendered by the first and second laws of thermodynamics now seems more rash than was warranted, more subjective than was proper, and more trusting in the incorruptibility of truth than seems legitimate, it was nevertheless quite real. This frenzy resulted, in part, because the evolution of thermodynamics was particularly susceptible to logical insecurity. Thermodynamics was formulated before all the essential physical facts had been accumulated. There were too many exciting overtones to postpone the triumph. Thus, the laws of thermodynamics, adorned by their great generality and seeming invulnerability, appeared to have sprung full-blown from the head of Zeus. The first law was almost a triumph of *a priori* human thought. The second law lay concealed beneath not only steam-power engineering and thermodynamic efficiency, but also coincidence, chance, probability, equilibrium, and irreversibility. Yet once formulated, the second law was much more open to potential interpretations that were relevant to matters of religious concern than was the first law.

The laws of thermodynamics demonstrate that no matter how good, how secure, or how elegant a scientific theory is, it is never immune to being used in ways that transgress the limits of credulity to the point of sheer ridiculousness—at least in the eyes of subsequent generations. All kinds of private metaphysics and theology have grown like weeds in the garden of thermodynamics. It was inevitable that the second law, which threatened at one point to destroy the universal validity of mechanism in the world, was worthy of serious attention by philosophers, metaphysicians, and theologians. This consideration did not last. And so it might be legitimate to ask whether religion and science must always have relations with each other. If the answer is yes, we must then ask: What kind of relations? And how *is* science built into the ceremony and life of religion?

The substantive documents that served as the basis for this study were imbedded in words like *God, creation, world, origins, time, energy,* and *entropy*. These were used with so many different mean-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ings in the literature that it should not be completely surprising that one and the same set of principles could be manipulated to demonstrate such diverse theses. It should remind one of Wittgenstein's dictum: "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about.' . . . For philosophical problems arise when language *goes* on *holiday*."

We conclude with a passage from an essay that suggested the title for this analysis. With poetic and prophetic complacency, Nietzsche wrote in 1873 in *The Use and Abuse of History*:

> [There is] a third way of looking at the past . . . beside the other two [*viz.* monumental and antiquarian history]. This is the "critical" way, which is also in the service of life. Man must have the strength to break up the past, and apply it, too, in order to live. He must bring the past to the bar of judgment, interrogate it remorselessly, and finally condemn it. Every past is worth condemning; this is the rule in mortal affairs, which always contain a large measure of human power and human weakness. It is not justice that sits in judgment here, nor mercy that proclaims the verdict, but only life, the dim, driving force that insatiably desires—itself. Its sentence is always unmerciful, always unjust, as it never flows from a pure fountain of knowledge, though it would generally turn out the same if Justice herself delivered it. "For everything that is born is *worthy* of being destroyed. . . ." Its [life's] past is critically examined, the knife put to its roots, and all the "pieties" are grimly trodden under foot. The process is always dangerous, even for life; and the men or the times that serve life in this way, by judging and annihilating the past, are always dangerous to themselves and others. For as we are merely the resultant of previous generations, we are also the resultant of their errors, passions, and crimes; it is impossible to shake off this chain. Though we condemn the errors and think we have escaped them, we cannot escape the fact that we spring from them. At best, it comes to a conflict between our innate, inherited nature and our knowledge, between a stern, new discipline and an ancient tradition; and we plant a new way of life, a new instinct, a second nature, that withers the first. It is an attempt to gain a past *a posteriori* from which we might spring, as against that from which we do spring; always a dangerous attempt, as it is difficult to find a limit to the denial of the past, and the second natures are generally weaker than the first. . . . The consolation is the knowledge that this "first nature" was once a second, and that every conquering "second nature" becomes a first.[66]

This article is based on an address by Professor Hiebert to the Science and Contemporary Society Symposium, held in December, 1965, at the University of Notre Dame in celebration of the centennial year of the College of Science. It is being published in a symposium monograph.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

REFERENCES

1. J. R. Mayer, "Bemerkungen über die Kräfte der unbelebten Natur," *Annalen der Chemie und Pharmacie,* Vol. 42 (1842), p. 234.

2. Rudolph Clausius, "Ueber verschiedene für die Anwendung bequeme Formen der Hauptgleichungen der mechanishen Wärmetheorie," *Annalen der Physik und Chemie,* Vol. 125 (1865), p. 400.

3. Sir William G. Armstrong, "Presidential Address," *British Association for the Advancement of Science* (Annual Report of 1863; London, 1864), pp. li-lxiv.

4. See Edward L. Youmans, *The Correlation and Conservation of Forces: A Series of Expositions by Prof. Grove, Prof. Helmholtz, Dr. Mayer, Dr. Faraday, Prof. Liebig and Dr. Carpenter* (New York, 1865); Thomas Laycock, *Mind and Brain* or *The Correlations of Consciousness and Organization with its application to philosophy, zoology, physiology, mental pathology, and the practice of medicine* (2 vols.; Edinburgh, 1860); James Kay Shuttleworth, "On public education and the relation of moral and physical forces in civilization," *National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Transactions* (London, 1861), pp. 79-109; James Hinton, *Life in Nature* (London, 1862). In Germany and Holland the public response to the philosophical and theological significance of the energy-conservation principle was stimulated by discussions about vital force (*Lebenskraft*), the matter-force doctrines of the materialists, and hostile reactions thereto. See, for example, Justus Liebig, *Chemische Briefe* (Heidelberg, 1845); Carl Vogt, *Physiologische Briefe für Gebildete aller Stände* (2d ed.; Giessen, 1853); Jacob Moleschott, *Der Kreislauf des Lebens: Physiologische Antworten auf Liebig's Chemische Briefe* (Mainz, 1852); Ludwig Büchner, *Kraft und Stoff: Empirisch-naturphilosophische Studien* (Frankfurt, 1855); Friedrich Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung der Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1866); and numerous revisions of the above works.

5. William R. Grove, *The Correlation of Physical Forces;* quoted from the first American edition as given in Youmans, *loc. cit.,* pp. 178, 199.

6. William B. Carpenter, "On the Mutual Relations of the Vital and Physical Forces," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society,* Vol. 140 (London, 1850), pp. 727-57.

7. *Ibid.,* p. 757.

8. *Ibid.,* p. 737.

9. *Ibid.,* pp. 740-41.

10. *Ibid.,* p. 752.

11. *Ibid.,* p. 730.

12. Herbert Spencer, *First Principles of a New System of Philosophy* (New York 1866 edition of the first published version of 1862), pp. 44, 66.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

13. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 280-82.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 501.
17. Herbert Spencer, *Ecclesiastical Institutions: Being Part VI of the Principles of Sociology* (New York, 1885), pp. 827-43.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 843.
19. Ernst Haeckel, "Die Wissenschaft und der Umsturz," *Die Zukunft*, Vol. 10 (1895), pp. 197-206.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
21. Youmans, *The Correlation and Conservation of Forces, loc. cit.*, p. xii.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. xxx-xxxii.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. xxxiii-xxxv.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. xlii-xliii.
26. George F. Barker, *The Correlation of Vital and Physical Forces* (New Haven, 1870), pp. 26-27.
27. Wilhelm Ostwald, *Monism as the Goal of Civilization* (Hamburg, 1913). This work was published by the International Committee of Monism and distributed as a brochure free of charge. For a sarcastic analysis of Ostwald's brand of energetistic monism, see Oskar H. Schmitz, *Die Welt der Halbgebildeten* (6th ed.; Munich, 1914). Also Wilhelm von Schnehen, *Energetische Weltanschauung? Eine kritische Studie mit besonderer Rücksicht auf W. Ostwald's Naturphilosphie* (Leipzig, 1908).
28. Ostwald, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-19.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-23.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-35.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
34. Michael Maher, "Energy," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5 (1909), pp. 422-428; D. Mercier, *La pensée et la loi de la conservation* (Louvain, 1900); M. P. De Munnynck, "La conservation de l'énergie et la liberté morale," *Revue Thomiste*, Vol. 5 (1897), pp. 153-79; D. Mercier, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy* (London, 1917).
35. Hermann von Helmholtz, *Vorträge und Reden*, Vol. 1 (Braunschweig, 1884), p. 152.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

36. Maher, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-28.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 428.

38. Oliver Lodge, *Man and the Universe* (London, 1909), p. 69. For a comprehensive discussion of the role of energy conservation in the interaction between the mental and the material aspects of things, see the notes by Lodge, Hobson, Minchin, McDougall, Worthington, Sharpe, Peddie, Preece, Muirhead, Culverwell, and Bowman *Nature* Vol. 67 (1903), pp. 595-97, 611-12; Vol. 68 (1903), pp. 31-33, 53, 77-78, 126-27, 150-52.

39. Arnold Lunn and J. B. S. Haldane, *Science and the Supernatural: A Correspondence* (New York, 1935).

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 167-75.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

42. See, for example, Arnold Lunn, "Introduction," D. Dewar and H. S. Shelton, *Is Evolution Proved?* (London, 1947); Arnold Lunn, *The Revolt Against Reason* (New York, 1951); J. B. S. Haldane, *The Outlook of Science* (London, 1935); J. B. S. Haldane, *Science and Well-Being* (London, 1935).

43. Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (Cambridge, 1928), p. 333.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75.

45. William Ralph Inge, *The Church in the World* (London, 1928); Arnold Lunn, *A Flight from Reason: A Study of the Victorian Heresy* (London, 1931).

46. William Ralph Inge, *God and the Astronomers; The Warburton Lectures of 1931-33* (London, 1934), pp. v-vii.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

48. *Ibid.*, Chap. 2: "The New Götterdämmerung," pp. 19-70.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-28.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

53. Pierre Duhem, "Physique de Croyant," *Annales de philosophie chrétienne*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Oct. and Nov., 1905), pp. 44ff and 133ff. English translation in Pierre Duhem, "Appendix: Physics of a Believer," *Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* (Princeton, 1954), pp. 273-311.

54. Abel Rey, "La philosophie scientifique de M. Duhem," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, Vol. 12 (1904), pp. 699-744.

55. Duhem, *Aim and Structure*, pp. 273-74.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 274-75.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 275-79.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 282-87.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 287-88.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 288.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*, p. 290.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 291.
64. John Tyndall, *Constitution of the Universe* (Melbourne, 1869), p. 32.
65. Inge, *God and the Astronomer*, p. 30. Quoted from Urban, *The Intelligible World.*
66. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie," the second essay in "Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen," *Sämmtliche Werke,* Band II (Stuttgart, 1964), pp. 124-25; English translation in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche,* Vol. 5 (London, 1909), pp. 28-30.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Notes on Contributors

ROBERT ALTER, born in 1935 in New York City, is Assistant Professor of English at Columbia University. He is the author of *Rogue's Progress: Studies in the Picaresque Novel* (Cambridge, 1964). Mr. Alter, a frequent contributor to *Book Week* and *Midstream*, writes a regular column for *Commentary*. At present, he is a Guggenheim Fellow and is writing a book on Fielding.

N. V. M. GONZALEZ, born in 1915 in Romblon, the Philippines, is Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of the Philippines. The author of *A Season of Grace* (Manila, 1956); *The Bamboo Dancers* (Manila, 1959); *Children of the Ash Covered Loam and Other Stories* (Manila, 1954); and *Look, Stranger, On This Island Now* (Manila, 1963), he was the winner of the 1960 Republic Cultural Heritage Award and the 1961 Rizal Pro-Patria Award.

HOWARD HIBBETT, born in 1920 in Akron, Ohio, is Professor of Japanese Literature and Chairman of the Department of Far-Eastern Languages at Harvard University. The author of *The Floating World in Japanese Fiction* (New York, 1959), Mr. Hibbett has also translated Tanizaki Junichirō's *The Key* (New York, 1961), *Seven Japanese Tales* (New York, 1963), and *The Diary of a Mad Old Man* (New York, 1965). He has spent approximately four years in residence in Japan, studying at Kyoto and Tokyo Universities.

ERWIN N. HIEBERT, born in 1919 in Saskatchewan, Canada, is Professor of the History of Science at the University of Wisconsin. He is the author of *The Impact of Atomic Energy* (Newton, Kansas, 1961) and *Historical Roots of the Principle of Conservation of Energy* (Madison, 1962). His interest has been the history of physical science and thought since 1800, with special emphasis on the history of thermodynamics.

CZESLAW MILOSZ, born in 1911 in Lithuania, is Professor of Slavic Languages and Literature at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the author of several volumes of poetry in Polish; *The Captive Mind* (New York, 1953); *La Prise du Pouvoir* (a novel; Paris, 1953); *Tal der Issa* (a novel; Köln, 1961). Mr. Milosz has also translated French, American, and English poetry into Polish.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EMIR RODRIGUEZ MONEGAL, born in 1921 in Melo, Uruguay, is Editor-in-Chief of *Mundo Nuevo,* a magazine concerned with Latin American affairs and published in Paris under the auspices of the Instituto Latinoamericano de Relaciones Internacionales. He is the author of *José E. Rodó en el Novecientos* (Montevideo, 1950); *El juicio de los parricidas* (Buenos Aires, 1956); *Las raíces de Horacio Quiroga* (Montevideo, 1960); *Narradores de esta América* (Montevideo, 1961); and *El viajero inmóvil, Introducción a Pablo Neruda* (Buenos Aires, 1966).

COSTAS M. PROUSSIS, born in Cyprus in 1911, is Director of Studies and Professor of Classics at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School in Brookline, Massachusetts. He is the author of *Grammar of Modern Greek* (Cyprus, 1934); *Latin Grammar* (Cyprus, 1943); *The Poet Costis Palamis* (1943); *Aesthetic Culture* (1946); and *Cyprus Prose Writing* (1949). He has also edited the magazines: *Essay and Criticism* (Athens, 1932); *Cyprus Letters* (Cyprus, 1934-48); and *Cyprus Studies* (Cyprus, 1940-48).

GEORGE N. SFEIR, born in 1922 in Lebanon, is Assistant Manager and Counsel for the Intra Bank S. A. in New York City. Mr. Sfeir has written articles on contemporary Arab writers for *The New York Times Book Review,* and is the author of numerous articles, both in Arabic and English, in the fields of Arab banking, government, and law.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Index of Authors, *DÆDALUS*, Volume 95, 1966

Abrams, Charles, 64

Alter, Robert, 972

Aranguren, José Luis L., 590

Aron, Raymond, 479

Bateson, Mary Catherine, 740

van den Bergh, Godfried van Benthem, 828

Clark, Kenneth B., 239

Dentler, Robert, 45

Dyckman, John W., 797

Edwards, G. Franklin, 1

Erikson, Erik H., 145

Fischer, John H., 24

Foley, Eugene P., 107

Fourastié, Jean, 558

Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 572

Gladwyn, Lord, 694

Gonzalez, N. V. M., 961

Grier, Eunice, 77

Grier, George W., 77

Handlin, Oscar, 268

Hibbett, Howard, 925

Hiebert, Erwin N., 1046

Hoffmann, Stanley, 862

Huntington, Samuel P., 763

Jaguaribe, Helio, 607

Kissinger, Henry A., 503

Málek, Ivan, 644

Meyerson, Martin, 713

Milosz, Czeslaw, 1004

Monegal, E. R., 986

Mus, Paul, 813

Nicol, Davidson, 674

O'Connell, D. P., 627

Proussis, Costas M., 1021

Rainwater, Lee, 172

Scrimshaw, Nevin S., 789

Sfeir, George N., 941

Sheatsley, Paul B., 217

Tinbergen, J., 530

Waddington, C. H., 666

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Issues of *DÆDALUS* in Print

These may be ordered from the *Dædalus* Subscription Office, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 280 Newton Street, Brookline Station, Boston, Massachusetts 02146 postpaid. Back issues of *Dædalus* are priced at $2.00 each. Back issues of special numbers are priced at $3.75 domestic and $4.25 foreign.

Tradition and Change *(Summer 1966)*

Contributors: Mary Catherine Bateson, Godfried Van Benthem van den Bergh, John W. Dyckman, Stanley Hoffmann, Samuel P. Huntington, Martin Meyerson, Paul Mus, Nevin S. Scrimshaw.

Conditions of World Order *(Spring 1966)*

Contributors: José Luis L. Aranguren, Raymond Aron, Jean Fourastié, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Lord Gladwyn, Stanley Hoffmann, Helio Jaguaribe, Henry A. Kissinger, Ivan Málek, Davidson Nicol, D. P. O'Connell, Jan Tinbergen, C. H. Waddington.

The Negro American—2 (special issue, *Winter 1966)*

Contributors: Charles Abrams, Kenneth B. Clark, Robert A. Dentler, G. Franklin Edwards, Erik H. Erikson, John H. Fischer, Eugene P. Foley, Eunice Grier, George Grier, Oscar Handlin, Lee Rainwater, Paul B. Sheatsley. ($3.00, domestic; $3.50, foreign)

The Negro American—1 (special issue, *Fall 1965*)

Contributors: Robert Coles, St. Clair Drake, Rupert Emerson, Rashi Fein, Joseph H. Fichter, Harold C. Fleming, John Hope Franklin, Philip M. Hauser, Everett C. Hughes, Martin Kilson, Daniel P. Moynihan, Talcott Parsons, Thomas F. Pettigrew, James Tobin, John B. Turner, James Q. Wilson, Whitney M. Young, Jr. ($3.00, domestic; $3.50, foreign)

Creativity and Learning *(Summer 1965)*

Contributors: Philip H. Abelson, J. Douglas Brown, Loren Eiseley, Caryl P. Haskins, David Hawkins, Jerome Kagan, George B. Kistiakowsky, Lawrence S. Kubie, Nevitt Sanford, E. Paul Torrance, Jerome B. Wiesner, Cliff W. Wing, Jr.

Utopia *(Spring 1965)*

Contributors: François Bloch-Lainé, Crane Brinton, Northrop Frye, Bertrand de Jouvenel, George Kateb, Maren Lockwood, Frank E. Manuel, John Maynard Smith, Lewis Mumford, John R. Pierce, Paul B. Sears, Judith N. Shklar, Adam B. Ulam.

Science and Culture *(Winter 1965)*

Contributors: James Ackerman, Daniel Bell, Harvey Brooks, René Dubos, Oscar Handlin, Gerald Holton, Gyorgy Kepes, Edmund R. Leach, Harry Levin, Herbert Marcuse, Margaret Mead, Robert S. Morison, Talcott Parsons, Don K. Price, Eric Weil.

Continued

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED